

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

POLICY ON DETERMINATION OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSEWORK

Approved by the Faculty Council – November 2, 2016

INTRODUCTION. The American Bar Association and Department of Education require that schools adopt, publish, and enforce written policies on the determination of credit hours. The ABA defines a “credit hour” as an “amount of work that reasonably approximates” one hour of classroom instruction per week for 15 weeks plus two hours of out-of-class work for the same period “or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” Since the 15-week period may include one week for a final exam, the ABA/DOE rule contemplates 14 weeks of class meetings.

St. John’s policy, set forth below, is based on 13 weeks of class meetings plus an exam period. This is permissible under the ABA Standards. The ABA and DOE minimums have been adapted to a 14-week semester (13 weeks of classes plus an exam period), as permitted by ABA Interpretation 310-2, by extending the amount of classroom time from a 50-minute “hour” to 55 minutes and by requiring 2.5-3.0 hours per week of out-of-class work instead of 2.0.

In addition, a goal of this policy is to codify St. John’s long-standing practice to exceed the ABA and DOE’s minimums.

The policy strives to provide clear guidance while also maximum flexibility to faculty, who are in the best position to determine out-of-class contact time for their students. In determining that 15 pages of reading per credit per week presumptively satisfies the out-of-class aspect of the policy, the Law School administration and Curriculum Committee consulted the following credit hour calculator from Rice University: <http://cte.rice.edu/blogarchive/2016/07/11/workload>. As noted, the calculator is based on empirical research into reading speeds and absorption rates based on expected mastery of the material. In addition, the Curriculum Committee received input from students on the expected workload necessary to achieve the stated minimums under this policy. Finally, the Law School will continue to monitor this policy through, among other things, student evaluations, which ask about the perceived workload for particular courses.

APPLICABILITY. This policy applies to all courses offered by the School of Law, regardless of degree program.

GENERAL POLICY ON CREDIT HOURS.

It is the policy of this Law School that a “credit hour” is:

(a) Exam Courses. For courses assessed primarily by a final exam:

(i) One hour of in-class instructional time per week for 13 weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. For purposes of this section, an “hour” is defined as 55 minutes;

(ii) Each week for 13 weeks: at least two-and-a-half hours of time spent preparing for class, reviewing class materials, completing assignments or assessments other than a final exam, and preparing for the final exam. For courses scheduled over a period other than 13 weeks, an equivalent amount of out-of-class work must be assigned. For purposes of this section, an “hour” is defined as 60 minutes; and

(iii) A final exam of at least 2 hours (1- or 2-credit courses) or 3 hours (3- or 4-credit courses). For purposes of this section, an “hour” is defined as 60 minutes.

(b) Non-Exam Courses. For courses assessed primarily by means other than a final exam (e.g., seminars and skills courses), other than those listed in (c) through (i) below:

(i) One hour of in-class instructional time per week for 13 weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. For purposes of this section, an “hour” is defined as 55 minutes; and

(ii) Each week for 13 weeks: At least three hours of time spent preparing for class, reviewing class materials, and completing assessments other than a final exam. For courses scheduled over a period other than 13 weeks, an equivalent amount of out-of-class work must be assigned. For purposes of this section, an “hour” is defined as 60 minutes.

(c) Clinics. Clinics require a minimum of 14 hours per week (for 13 weeks) of time spent working on clinic cases, in addition to the time spent preparing for a weekly two-hour seminar. Students taking a clinical course are required to keep detailed logs of their clinical work, which must be reviewed by the professor teaching the clinic before assigning a grade.

(d) Externships. Students in the Externship Program take two courses concurrently. The first is a weekly seminar (Externship Seminar, Externship Seminar-Advanced, or Summer Externship Seminar) that is scheduled in accordance with section (b) above. The second is a pass-fail course, Externship Placement, which requires 140 hours of field work (Fall and Spring) or 168 hours (Summer). Students taking an externship are required to keep detailed logs of their work, which must be reviewed by the applicable externship seminar professor and supervising attorney before assigning a grade.

(e) Pre-session courses. To satisfy sections (a)(ii) or (b)(ii) above, a course scheduled during a pre-session may require completion of readings or assignments done before or after the

scheduled pre-session period, which must be completed and assessed before a final grade is assigned.

(f) Activity credits. To receive a passing mark for a leadership position in a co-curricular activity, a student must keep a detailed log of time that demonstrates that he or she worked at least 45 hours per credit received. The faculty advisor is responsible for reviewing the student's log before certifying that the student completed the requisite amount of time. This function may not be delegated to a student leader of the co-curricular activity.

(g) Directed research. To receive a passing grade for Directed Research, a student must keep a detailed log of time that demonstrates that he or she worked at least 90 hours (2-credits) or 45 hours (1-credit) on the project, including time spent researching a topic, creating an outline, drafting the paper, re-writing the paper, and meeting with the professor or a research librarian. The professor is responsible for reviewing the student's log before assigning a grade and certifying that the student completed the requisite amount of time.

(h) Pro Bono Scholars Program. Students in the Pro Bono Scholars Program take four courses: Pro Bono Scholars Placement I (6 credits pass-fail), Placement II (4 credits graded), a seminar or Directed Research (2 credits), and a practice writing portfolio review (2 credits graded). To receive a passing grade on Placement I and II, a student in the program must complete at least 514 hours of field work (43 hours per week for the 12-week program, exclusive of the seminar or Directed Research). The student must keep detailed logs of his or her work, which must be reviewed by the professor and supervising attorney before a grade is assigned. For further documentation of how the credits were allocated, please refer to the program proposal submitted to the Faculty Council.

(i) Practica. Students in the international practica take the following courses: International Law Practicum (7 credits), International Law APWR Tutorial (3 credits), and International Law Directed Research (3 credits). To receive a passing grade for the International Law Practicum, students must work full-time for 4-5 months at an approved placement. Specific project lengths and hours above this minimum are worked out by the student and the site supervisor. For further documentation of how the credits were allocated, please refer to the program proposal submitted to the Faculty Council.

NEW COURSE APPROVALS. Effective immediately, all proposals for new courses must include a justification for the number of credits to be awarded that includes in-class, out-of-class, and exam time in accordance with this policy. The Curriculum Committee, as part of the curricular approval process, shall review proposals for compliance with this policy. Existing courses will be reviewed for compliance with this policy as they are offered; please refer to the next section for the procedures for doing so.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE. To ensure compliance with this policy, ABA Standard 310, and applicable federal regulations:

(a) In-class time and exam time. The Associate Academic Dean shall schedule courses to ensure that they meet for the requisite minutes of instructional time. In general, classes will be scheduled in the following block configurations:

Credits	Configuration Option (Option A is the default schedule under each configuration.)	Schedule (Unless otherwise specified, does not include time for a break during the class meeting.)
1	A	Once per week for 55 minutes.
	B	Once per week for 7 weeks for 120 minutes each class meeting, which includes the option for up to a 10-minute break.
2	A	Once per week for 120 minutes, which includes the option for up to a 10-minute break.
	B	Twice per week for 55 minutes.
3	A	Twice per week for 85 minutes.
	B	Thrice per week for 55 minutes.
	C	Once per week for 180 minutes, which includes the option for up to a 15-minute break. <i>With rare exception, this configuration is permissible only for skills courses where students would benefit from extended periods of active engagement (e.g., Trial Advocacy).</i>
4	A	Twice per week for 120 minutes, which includes the option for up to a 10-minute break.
	B	Thrice per week for 75 minutes.

The Associate Academic Dean, Assistant Dean for Students, and Registrar shall schedule final exams in accordance with section (a)(iii) above.

(b) Out-of-class work. Course syllabi shall affirmatively demonstrate—through specified assignments, readings, projects, simulations, and other work—that students’ out-of-class time will meet the requirements of this policy. Readings—*on average*—of at least 15 pages per credit per week shall be presumed to meet this rule. (For example, a 4-credit class, such as Evidence, will comply with this rule if the professor assigns at least 60 pages of reading per week.) While the stated average minimum page numbers assigned is presumed to meet the rule, faculty may assign less than the minimum stated when, in their professional judgment, the problem, statute, or other material assigned is complex in nature and it is expected that the amount of time it will take students to complete the out of class assignment will meet the rule. This will be so indicated on the syllabus itself.

The Associate Academic Dean shall review all course syllabi, generally at the start of the semester, to ensure compliance with this policy.

PUBLICATION. This policy shall be published in the *Student Handbook* and on the Law School website.