

**UNH FACULTY SENATE**  
**MOTION # XXIV- M18**  
*On Including Common Language about Compliance with  
The Federal Definition of a Credit Hour in Syllabi*

1. Motion presenter: Lisa MacFarlane, on behalf of the Academic Program Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate Discussion: 03/02/20, 04/27/20, and 05/04/20

**3. Rationale and Preamble:**

The U.S. Department of Education has a specialized definition of a credit hour: one credit is defined as 3 hours of work per week over a 14-week semester (4 credits x 3 hours = 12 hours/per week). Because UNH uses a 4-credit system versus a more typical 3-credit system, we seek to underscore our understanding of the federal government's expectations for student work per credit. The DOE's expectation of effort for a semester-long 4-credit course is 12 hours/week (4 credits x 3 hours = 12 hours/per week) each week for a 14-week semester, for a total of 168 hours / 4 credit class.

The purpose of this motion, therefore, is simply to affirm that understanding, in accordance with both federal and New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) requirements for contact time and credit hours earned.

The Academic Program Committee, therefore, submits the following three-part motion:

**4. Motion:**

- i. We suggest that syllabi include a brief section that explains how credits are counted and conferred. We recommend some version of the following:**

*“This syllabus reflects the federal definition of a credit hour, which entails a minimum 3 hours of engaged time per week per credit over a 14-week semester. Examples of engaged time include class time, assignments, examinations, laboratories, participation in course-related experiences (attending a talk or performance, speakers and events, fieldwork, etc.), conferences, and office hours. For more information, please see: <https://www.neche.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Affirmation-of-Compliance.pdf>.”*

- ii. An outside evaluator should be able to see in any UNH course syllabus a reasonable amount of content to meet the above estimated effort/week. A syllabus without sufficient workload expectations or a work schedule reflective of 14 weeks might be seen as not meeting the NECHE standard. We suggest faculty include in their syllabi, to the degree reasonable, a sufficiently detailed schedule of topics and assignments/activities to support compliance with the federal definition.**

- iii. The Provost's office should develop a website or page with useful resources on credit hour and workload expectations for faculty to consult as they draw up their syllabi. In addition to the comprehensive information already provided in the pre-loaded materials on Canvas (UNH Policies and Procedures for Students), this page should include all relevant information for the development of syllabi, including current policies and recommendations, the federal definition of the credit hour, and a tool for a course workload estimator. For a useful work estimator, please see Rice University's on-line tool: <https://cte.rice.edu/workload>.**

- 4. Senate action: The motion passed with 58 in favor, none opposed, and 4 abstentions**

5. Senate chair's signature:



David Bachrach

Forwarded to the following on May 26, 2020

President James Dean

Wayne Jones, Provost

P.T. Vasudevan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Barbara White, UNH Accreditation Liaison Officer, NECHE

All Deans

All Department Chairs