

Calculating Credit & Notional Hours

Refer to BUS and BGRS Policies

- Undergraduate: [Definition of Credit Hours for The UWI](#)
- Graduate: [Guidelines for credit system for graduate taught courses/programmes](#)

Operational Definitions

Contact hours is used very broadly, to refer to the **amount of time (in terms of hours) spent by a learner in direct learning or contact with the teaching/ training staff of a programme**. In The UWI context this refers to instructional hours such as for lectures, seminars and tutorials.

Notional learning hours refer to all the time a student would spend on a course, on average, to achieve the learning outcomes. The calculation of notional learning hours takes into account contact hours, self-study, supervised labs, directed learning activities workshops, projects, internships or time spent in workplace or fieldwork and Assessment. The Board for Undergraduate Studies (BUS) has provided guidelines for allocating credits and estimating workloads based on the concept of notional hours of learning, which is **“The number of hours which it is expected that a learner (at a particular level) will spend, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes at that level.”**

Undergraduate course credits are calculated on the basis of notional hours. Notional hours are usually calculated on a per week basis. For example, ONE (1) credit is equivalent to three notional hours of learning per week per semester for a 12-week semester. Therefore, one lecture (taught) or seminar credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time. Over an entire semester (12 weeks), this formula represents at least 12 hours of class time and 24 hours of student preparations. A 3-credit course would therefore be 9 notional hours of learning. When calculating notional learning in The UWI context, one Credit or three notional hours of learning per week per semester may include:

- One contact hour (instructional hour) and Two hours out- of- class student work per week per semester; Or
- Two or Three hours of supervised laboratory work per week per semester; Or
- Four to Six hours of directed learning activities (including project work, research work, practicums and internships) undertaken by the student out of class per week per semester.

ONE credit hour is equivalent to three notional hours of learning per week per semester. A contact hour represents the measure of scheduled instruction given to students and is dependent on the instructional format for the course.

1-hour contact + 2 hours out of class= 3 notional hours

The out of class activities include, but are not limited to independent study and reading, preparation for contact hours, coursework, revision and summative assessment.

Based on this definition of credit hours, a 3-credit course would be equivalent to nine notional hours of learning per week per semester. The average student workload would therefore be as follows:

A. Full-time Student reading FIVE three-credit courses per semester:

1 credit = 3 notional hours of learning per week.

5 x 3-credit courses = 45 notional hours of learning per week

B. Part-time Student reading THREE three-credit courses per semester:

1 credit = 3 notional hours of learning per week

3 x 3 - credit courses = 27 notional hours of learning per week

Examples of work representing ONE credit hour or three (3) **notional hours of learning** per week:

1. One contact hour and Two hours out-of-class student work per week per semester; Or

2. Two or Three hours of supervised laboratory work per week per semester; Or

3. Four to Six hours of directed learning activities (including project work, research work, practicums, and internships) undertaken by the student out of class per week per semester.

Note also that according to the BUS guidelines, “revision conducted during the three-week formal examination period at the end of the Semester is subsumed in this definition of credit hours on a pro-rata basis.”

An example of Undergraduate 3 credits

Type	Duration (Number of weeks)	Contact Hours	Credits
Lecture	12	12	1
Tutorial	12	12	1
Labs	8	16	1
Other (e.g.)	12	20	
Total:	12		3

An example of Undergraduate 4 credits

Type	Duration (Number of weeks)	Contact Hours	Credits
Lecture	12	36	1
Tutorial	12	36	1
Labs	12	24	2
Other (e.g.)	12	48	
Total:	12	144	4

Example of an **online** 3 credit course

Type	Duration (Number of weeks)	Contact Hours	Credits
Online Lecture (Synchronous)	12	36	1
Asynchronous Assignments, activities, self-directed learning)	12	48	2
Asynchronous (Discussion Forum)	7	24	
Total:	12 weeks	108	3

Example of a **blended** (Hybrid) 3 credit course

Type	Duration (Number of weeks)	Contact Hours	Credits
Lecture Online (Synchronous)	4	8	
Lecture (FTF)	8	16	
Tutorials	12 (online and/or FTF)	24	
Asynchronous Assignments, activities, self-directed learning)	12	48	
Asynchronous (Discussion Forum)	3	12	
Total:	12 weeks	108	3

Graduate Studies & Research

The system for allocating credits at the postgraduate level is based on the formula that 1 credit is equivalent to:

- 12 Lecture contact hours,
- 24 hours of laboratory work, supervised field assignments, seminars, or formal group discussions or,
- 48 hours non-supervised research work.

Example of graduate 3 credit Taught Master's

Type	Duration (Number of weeks)	Contact Hours	Credits
Lecture	12	12	1
Labs, office hours	8	24	1
Projects,	12	48	1
Total:	12	84	3