



Name of Policy: Academic Credits and Degrees
Responsible Department: Office of the Registrar
Responsible Administrator: Registrar
Effective Date: August 1, 2017

Definition of Credit Hour

In accordance with federal policy, Elms College defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that reasonably approximates:

1. One hour (50 minute period) of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. Laboratories, internships, clinicals and practica vary by program in terms of the number of hours required, but in general are 2-3 hours/week per credit.

For courses with non-traditional formats, e.g. accelerated, online or hybrid/blended, students are required to spend the equivalent amount of total time per credit hour as spent in traditional courses. However, the mix of time spent in direct instruction and time spent on assignments and other work, per week, will vary.

Credit Load

A course load of 12 to 18 credits is considered full-time for undergraduate students. Ordinarily, undergraduate students carry an average credit load of 15 to 16 hours a semester. Students with more than 18 credits are required to pay for the extra credit(s) at the continuing education per-credit rate, and must have approval from the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

A course load of 6 credits is considered full-time for graduate level students.

Degrees

Undergraduate Degrees

- An undergraduate associate degree (A.A.) normally represents the equivalent of two academic years of full-time study (and requiring a minimum of 60 semester credits) or its equivalent in depth and quality of experience.
- An undergraduate baccalaureate degree (B.A., B.S.) normally represents about four academic years (and requiring a minimum of 120 semester credits) of college study.

Graduate Degrees

- A first graduate degree (Master's-level, including M.A., M.S.), represents at least one year of postbaccalaureate study (requiring a minimum of 30 semester credits).
- Professional and specialty degrees (M.B.A., M.S.N., M.Ed., M.A.A.T., D.N.P.), normally require two or more years of full-time study. Extensive undergraduate preparation in the field may reduce the length of study to one year.

Graduate degrees include a significant component of coursework in addition to any supervised research or practice.

Undergraduate Degree/Graduation Requirements

In order to qualify for a baccalaureate degree, a student must:

- Comply with entrance requirements
- Complete a minimum of 120 credits
- Receive passing grades in all courses required for the degree
- Attain a minimum grade point average of 2.0 or higher, if specified by the major. (Transfer students must maintain a 2.0 average in courses taken at the college. Transfer credits are not included in determining Elms College's grade point average)
- Complete at least 45 semester hours as a matriculated student at Elms College for main campus programs; 42 credits for offsite and online programs and 30 credits for the RN-BS program.

NOTE: All students are subject to three types of course requirements:

- Core curriculum requirements
- Course requirements of the chosen major
- Elective courses sufficient to reach at least the minimum number of credits required for each degree level

Double Majors:

Students completing majors in related disciplines may include two courses that satisfy requirements for more than one major, subject to pre-approval from the registrar.

Graduate Degree/Graduation Requirements

To receive a master's degree, a student must:

- Comply with entrance requirements and be formally accepted into the program. (See descriptions of individual degree programs by divisions.)
- Complete a minimum of 30 credits and all program requirements (which may include additional credit requirements).
- Maintain an overall B (3.0) average with the exception of no more than two grades of C (2.0) permitted.
- Complete a minimum of 21 credits at Elms; only nine (9) transfer credits are allowed.
- Present the thesis or project by the required date (if applicable).
- Complete an "application for degree" form, which should be filed in the Registrar's Office no later than October 1st, as determined by the Registrar's Office that is prior to May graduation.

To receive a certificate of advanced graduate studies (CAGS), a student must:

- Comply with entrance requirements and be formally accepted into the program. (See descriptions of individual degree programs by divisions.)
- Complete a minimum of 30 credits and all program requirements.
- Maintain an overall B (3.0) average with the exception of no more than two grades of C (2.0) permitted.
- Complete a minimum of 21 credits at Elms; only nine (9) transfer credits are allowed.
- Present the thesis or project by the required date (if applicable).
- Complete an "application for degree" form, which should be filed in the Registrar's Office no later than October 1st, as determined by the Registrar's Office that is prior to May graduation.

*MSN and DNP students should refer to the MSN and DNP policy on Graduation Requirements in the School of Nursing section of the catalog.

Time Limit for Graduate Degree Completion:

Students must complete all degree requirements within six years of matriculation or as specifically required by the program. Petitions for an extension may be made in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, and must be approved by the program director and academic dean.