

“How do I ensure students are getting the appropriate number of contact hours in an online class?”

The New York State Department of Education has guidelines for determining “time on task” in online education. According to those guidelines: “Rather than try to distinguish between ‘in-class’ and ‘outside-class’ time for students, the faculty member developing and/or teaching the online course should calculate how much time a student doing satisfactory work would take to complete the work of the course...” You can find those guidelines, along with examples, here:

<http://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/distance-education-program-policies>

As an FYI, the university’s credit-hour policy does not talk about quantifiable equivalencies either, and our policy meets both NYS and MSCHE requirements. Here is the university’s latest policy, updated in 2019 to account for clinical hours. Here is what it says for online and hybrid courses:

Online—courses offered entirely online and without any required face-to-face class meetings. A week of instructional time is any given seven-day period in which at least one session of regularly scheduled instruction or examination occurs. Students are expected to be academically engaged through means which could include, but are not limited to, submitting an academic assignment; taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction; attending a virtual study group assigned by the instructor; contributing to an academic online discussion; and engaging in contact with the faculty member and class peers related to the academic subject of the course. Departments must document through scheduling of classes or syllabi that they are meeting the minimum semester credit hour requirement for the credit awarded. (U.S. DOE, CH-A5, 2.22.2013)

Hybrid—courses offered in a blended format with one or more required face-to-face class sessions and with one or more required online sessions. Departments must document through scheduling of classes or syllabi that they are meeting the minimum semester credit hour requirement for the credit awarded.

[http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/governing/academic_policies/Credit Hour Policy Revised2019.pdf](http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/governing/academic_policies/Credit_Hour_Policy_Revised2019.pdf)

(With thanks to Ann Tenglund for pulling this information together for us)