Instructional Time for Online Courses

Overview

At DePaul, most quarter-based courses earn four credits, where, according to the [Evaluation and Credit](#) policy, "the unit of credit is one quarter hour granted for 45 minutes of instructional time and at least two hours of additional assigned work each week, or an equivalent amount of work for other credit-bearing activities." For face-to-face and online synchronous classes, the division between "instructional time" and "additional assigned work" is straightforward. For online asynchronous and hybrid classes, on the other hand, differentiating these various uses of time can be a challenge. The table below provides some guidance. Our assumption is that "instructional time" includes activities that faculty engage in to explain, help interpret, contextualize, raise questions about and/or structure conversations around course content. "Additional assigned work" includes tasks that students engage in independently to either prepare for instructional time or apply concepts they have learned during the instructional time. Of course, these distinctions can be fuzzy at times, and some activities – like online discussion boards, for example – may include elements of both instructional time and assigned work. Nonetheless, we hope that these basic guidelines can help you think about how you can make the best use of time allotted for your course and how you convey to your students expectations for the different course components.

Note: These Guidelines are not intended to characterize or quantify faculty workload but to describe faculty instructional time with students in a variety of online formats.

Note: These Guidelines are also not intended to enumerate or describe best practices in faculty course development but to characterize the varieties of instruction that may occur with students.

Meeting Time Adjustments

While flexibility is a key benefit of online learning for both students and instructors, changing the time or length of your video conference meetings can be problematic. DePaul students lead busy lives and often build their course schedules around work obligations and caretaking responsibilities. To ensure equity for all students, please limit required video meetings to the times noted in the course registration system. In addition, please maintain preset meeting times, as cancelling or shortening regularly scheduled meetings can cause a course to fall short of its minimum instructional time requirements.

Reference: University of Southern California's guide to [calculating instructional time in online and hybrid classes](#)

Instructional Time (Counted as Contact Hours)	Possibly Counted as Contact Hours (depending on local academic unit practices)	Additional Assigned Work (Not Counted as Contact Hours)
Live Instruction/Interaction - Synchronous lectures via video conferencing - Synchronous learning activities via video conference - Recordings of synchronous video conference sessions **Custom Multimedia Content** - Original recordings (lectures, tutorials, etc.) created by current or past instructors explicitly for the course - Recordings of instructor interviews with guest experts **Facilitated Discussions** - Peer critiques - Online discussions facilitated by the instructor - Moderated video viewing/video discussion **Required Consultations** - Required one-on-one or small-group meetings with instructor *Note: All synchronous meeting time in hybrid courses counts toward contact hours.*	**Just-in-Time Updates** - Emails and announcements that contextualize current events, weekly readings, videos, etc. - Weekly learning introduction or summary (text or video-based) **Community Building** - Ice breakers - Initial group project brainstorming session - Small-group discussions **Assignment Feedback** - Personalized feedback on assignments **Knowledge Checks** - Graded quizzes and exams - Informal knowledge checks and ungraded quizzes - Surveys and polls that help identify knowledge gaps	**External Readings and Multimedia** - Book chapters, articles, etc. - Podcasts - External videos not created explicitly for the course (TED Talks, documentaries, etc.) - Optional articles or other readings based on current/breaking events. **Other Assignments** - Papers, essays, literature reviews - Problem sets, lab reports, etc. - Art/video/design projects **Group Study and Project Execution** - Group study sessions - Coordination of group tasks