

Credit Terms

Educational credit is used by postsecondary institutions to quantify and record a student's successful completion of a unit of study. Postsecondary education consists of courses and programs of instruction for persons who are high school graduates or the equivalent, or who are beyond compulsory school age.

Academic Levels

ACE evaluators use the following categories of educational credit when formulating credit recommendations:

Vocational Certificate. This category describes course work of the type normally found in certificate or diploma (nondegree) programs that are usually a year or less in length and designed to provide students with occupational skills. Course content is specialized, and the accompanying shop, laboratory, or similar practical components emphasize procedural more than analytical skills.

Lower-Division Baccalaureate/Associate Degree. This category describes course work of the type normally found in the first two years of a baccalaureate program and in programs leading to the associate degree. The instruction stresses development of analytical abilities at the introductory level. Verbal, mathematical, and scientific concepts associated with an academic discipline are introduced, as are basic principles. Occupationally-oriented courses in this category are normally designed to prepare a student to function as a technician in a particular field.

Upper-Division Baccalaureate. This category describes courses of the type found in the last two years of a baccalaureate program. The courses involve specialization of a theoretical or analytical nature beyond the introductory level. Successful performance by students normally requires prior study in the area.

Graduate Degree. This category describes courses with content of the type found in graduate programs. These courses often require independent study, original research, critical analysis, and the scholarly and professional application of the specialized knowledge or discipline. Students enrolled in such courses normally have completed a baccalaureate program.

Semester Hours

Credit recommendations for courses are not derived by simple arithmetic conversion. Evaluators exercise professional judgment and consider only those competencies that can be equated with civilian postsecondary curricula. Intensive courses offered by the military do not necessarily require as much outside preparation as many regular college courses. Evaluators consider the factors of pre- and post-course assignments, prior work-related experience, the concentrated nature of the learning experience, and the reinforcement of the course material gained in the subsequent work setting.

Credit recommendations for military occupations are based on the skills, competencies, and knowledge gained, as demonstrated through proficiency in a given occupation category, without reference to how much time elapsed during the learning process. The semester hour is used as a standard to express how many semester hours of appropriate course work a student would normally complete to attain the same learning outcomes or attest to the same level of competency.

Credit recommendations are expressed in semester credit hours. In determining semester hour recommendations, evaluators will be guided by, but not restricted to, the following standard definitions:

- One semester credit hour for the equivalent of 15 hours of classroom contact plus 30 hours of outside preparation; or
- One semester credit hour for the equivalent of 30 hours of laboratory work plus necessary outside preparation, normally expected to be 15 hours; or
- One semester credit hour for the equivalent of not less than 45 hours (contact hours) of shop instruction.