

The Continuing Education Unit – How to Calculate CEUs

One (1) Continuing Education Unit (CEU) equals ten (10) contact hours of learner interaction with the content of the learning activity, which includes classroom, self-paced instruction, pre/post assignments, and/or homework in support of a learning outcome. But how do you calculate the number of CEUs for a learning event? A *contact hour* is one clock hour of *interaction* between a learner and instructor, or between a learner and materials, which have been prepared to cause learning. Contact implies a connection between a learner and a learning source. For purposes of the CEU, that connection is two-way; that is, the instructor or learning source must monitor the learner's progress and/or provide some form of feedback to the learner. This definition applies for face-to-face interaction as well as distance learning programs. The CEU should not be awarded for learning activities in which individuals are engaged in unplanned, unsupervised, or non-sponsored learning.

Counting Hours toward CEU

When calculating the number of CEUs for a course, the number of contact minutes must be totaled and divided by 60 to arrive at the number of contact hours, see figure 1. Total contact hours must then be divided by 10 to obtain the number of CEUs. CEUs must be expressed in tenths of a CEU; that is, 17 contact hours equate to 1.7 CEU; a three contact hour program equates to .3 CEU.

Figure 1

Contact time (hours) =

$$\frac{(\text{total minutes for all activities}) - (\text{total minutes spent on non-allowable activities})}{60}$$

$$\text{*Number of CEUs} = \frac{\text{Contact time (hours)}}{10}$$

*Rounded to nearest tenth

Activities to Include When Calculating the CEU

The following learning activities are examples of types of activities to include when calculating contact hours for CEUs:

- **CLASS/MEETINGS.** Classroom or meeting session time led by instructor and/or discussion leader.
- **SELF PACED LEARNING EVENTS.** Learner activities in which a learner is engaged in a planned program of learning whereby the learner's progress is monitored and the learner receives feedback. Examples include independent study; computer assisted instruction, interactive video, and planned projects.
- **ASSESSMENT.** Learner assessment and program evaluations.
- **OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS.** Field trips, projects and assignments, which are an integral part of a course or program, may count towards contact hours; however, a standard number of hours should be assigned using the

- averaging method discussed in *Self-Paced Programs* below. If contact hours are assigned for the purpose of calculating CEU, the sponsor has the responsibility to validate the completion of the assignment by each learner.
- **LABORATORY ASSIGNMENTS.** Laboratory assignments tend to be an integral part of a planned program and are generally more structured than field experiences. Since the conditions for learning are rather consistent and the amount of time for assignments fairly even for all learners, the sponsor may choose to count each hour of lab time as a contact hour. If there is considerable variation in lab conditions and time required for the completion of assignments by different learners, the sponsor should consider establishing a standard number of contact hours based on the average time utilized by a number of learners.
 - **FIELD EXPERIENCES.** Field experiences provide learners opportunities to gain practical and realistic experiences, which cannot be acquired in a classroom setting. Such activities may or may not be highly structured, may vary in duration from one learner and location to another, and may not be readily calculated into contact hours. Sponsors often view field experiences in terms of tasks to be accomplished rather than the amount of time involved. Because of the unstructured nature of many field experiences, sponsors may choose to use some form of checklist to record the accomplishment of certain specified tasks. If the sponsor desires to count the field experience hours, the sponsor should first determine whether the field experience meets the ANSI/IACET Standard. If so, a standard number of contact hours could be determined by calculating the average time spent by several learners in different field experiences as discussed in the below section on *Self-Paced Programs*.

ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH THE CEU ARE NOT INTENDED

The following activities are not intended to receive the CEU. While these activities may be judged as worthwhile learning experiences, they should be measured and documented by some form of measurement other than the CEU.

- **ACADEMIC CREDIT COURSES.** Acceptance of IACET CEUs for college credit is at the discretion of the college or university.
- **ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES.** Holding membership or serving in some leadership capacity in an association or society do not qualify for the CEU.
- **COMMITTEE MEETINGS.** Participation in committee meetings and activities do not qualify for the CEU.
- **ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION.** CEUs may not be awarded for attendance at cultural performances, entertainment, or recreational activities unless they are an integral part of a planned course, which meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARSHIP.** CEUs may not be awarded for independent writings such as articles, books, research reports, or presentation of papers outside a planned, directly supervised continuing education experience that fulfills the CEU criteria.

- **MASS MEDIA PROGRAMS.** Programs delivered through the mass media (e.g., television, radio, newspaper) do not qualify for CEUs, unless these presentations are an integral part of a planned course, which meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **SOME MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS, EXHIBITIONS.** Meetings, conventions, and exhibitions, which attract large numbers of participants, involve different activities, and are conducted primarily for information sharing purposes generally, do not qualify for the CEU. Planned learning activities within such events, which meet the ANSI/IACET Standard are eligible for CEUs.
- **TRAVEL.** Travel or participation in a travel study program, do not qualify for CEUs, unless the educational component of travel study program meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **UNSUPERVISED STUDY.** Individual, self-directed study or other form of independent learning experience not planned, directed, and supervised by a sponsor do not qualify for CEUs.
- **WORK EXPERIENCE.** On-the-job training and other work experiences do not qualify for CEUs unless the work experience is structured as part of a planned and supervised continuing education experience that meets the Standard. CEUs are not to be awarded for life or previous work experiences.
- **YOUTH PROGRAMS.** Programs designed primarily for ages below adulthood.

Self-Paced Programs

In courses or programs where participants learn and progress at their own pace, the sponsor should establish a standard number of contact hours based on an average number of hours required of several representative learners to complete the program. A sponsor desiring to introduce a new self-paced course might select a representative sample of the intended audience - the larger the audience the better - to complete the course. Note the following illustration.

Course A is an individually-paced home study program with a post-test. Interaction with the instructor is online, through mail or phone. To arrive at an average time for completion of the program, five individuals are selected to complete a pilot program. Each participant in the pilot program represents the typical learner who will attend the learning event. Each participant records the actual amount of time spent completing the program.

Student #1 16 hours

Student #2 10 hours

Student #3 8.5 hours

Student #4 12 hours

Student #5 14.5 hours

(5) Students 61 hours = 12.2 hours

The decimal “.2” is rounded off to 12 hours and becomes the standard for course A. Therefore, 1.2 CEU is awarded to those who satisfactorily complete the course. Satisfactory completion might be based on the satisfactory completion of all assignments, including an 80% score on the post-test.

It is important that the person(s) responsible in the organization for calculating CEUs for learning events monitors the learning events for any changes. Reassessment should also take place in the event of a major change to course content, method of delivery, change in equipment/software, or demographic audience. The calculation of CEUs should be consistent and accurate at all times to ensure learners are receiving the appropriate number of CEUs.