

ABA Time Requirements

In the past, the ABA accreditation rules addressed only the time that needed to be spent in the classroom, and not the time students would spend out of class.

The current rules, however, impose requirements for both. Here is the text of Standard 310(b). Each credit hour requires:

- (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work per week for fifteen weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in subparagraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including simulation, field placement, clinical, co-curricular, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

The requirement is further explained in Interpretation 310-1:

For purposes of this Standard, fifty minutes suffices for one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction. An “hour” for out-of-class student work is sixty minutes. The fifteen-week period may include one week for a final examination.

In Class Time. The regular course and exam schedules are structured so as to meet the “one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction per week” requirement. So, for example, if you teach a two credit course it will meet for 100 minutes per week, and if you teach a three credit course it will meet for 150 minutes per week. There are 14 weeks in the semester, and the exam (or its equivalent) provides the 15th week.

Out-of-Class Time. The other part of the requirement – “two hours of out-of-class student work per week” is something that you need to keep in mind when designing the readings and other out-of-class assignments for your course.

Although Standard 310(b)(1) distinguishes between in and out of class time, the ABA, in a “Guidance Memo,” treats the total hours as a package. It provides this example for the requirements per credit hour in an exam course: “42.5 hours per credit of time spent in class, preparing for class (reading or completing class assignments or assessments), and preparing for and taking an exam.”

Putting it All Together

As you design your course and its workload, including edited writing seminars and directed research paper supervision, keep these numbers in mind:

- to get 2 credit hours, students should be spending at least 85 hours in and out of class during the semester (including the exam period)
- to get 3 credit hours, students should be spending at least 127.5 hours in and out of class during the semester (including the exam period)