

GUIDANCE FOR ESTIMATING EQUIVALENCY FOR A SEMESTER CREDIT HOUR

Revised on May 28, 2025

Note that this is an internal guidance document. The specific facts applicable to each institution must be taken into account when estimating equivalency. Both methods should be used as a 2-step process to determine if the results are consistent.

STEP 1: EQUIVALENCY BASED ON THE FORMULA (METHOD 1)

Use the following formula to determine approximate equivalency to a semester credit hour that is required in ABET accreditation criteria:

One ABET-equivalent semester credit hour = TPC/TPW where

TPC = Total number of [institution credits](#) to complete the required curriculum of the program being reviewed.

TPW = Total number of [weeks](#) a student needs to complete the required curriculum of the program being reviewed. TPW does not include the (final) exam week(s) when there are no classes.

Equivalency must also consider the content (topics included) in the required curriculum.

STEP 2: EQUIVALENCY BASED ON INSTITUTION'S CONVERSION (METHOD 2)

Use the following [table](#) to determine when to reach out to your assigned adjunct for feedback or for a 3-party opinion. This table is based on *the principle that one year of full-time study completed in one country is equivalent to one year of full-time study completed in another* and our experience in the past few years. NOTE that this table does not intend to prescribe a rigid conversion from one education system to the typical semester credit hour system in the US; refer to the Important Notes (next page) for details.

Type of Program Regardless of the Education System	Typical Range of the University-Claimed U.S. Semester Credit Hour Equivalency (SCHE)*	When to Contact Adjunct for feedback or for a 3-party opinion
4-year baccalaureate-level program (full-time study)	120-136	When the University-Claimed SCHE is greater than 136
<ul style="list-style-type: none">120 semester credits typically correspond to 180 quarter credits. (1 semester credit = 1.5 quarter credits)240 ECTS usually corresponds to 120 US semester credits. (2 ECTS = 1 SCH)		
1-year master's level program (full-time study)	30-36	When the University-Claimed SCHE is greater than 36
*Programs with different years of study should be calculated proportionally.		

Example – Using Both Methods Together

Scenario 1: The program requires 186 institutional credits, and the students are in class 17 weeks/semester, for 8 semesters.

STEP 1: $186 / 136 = 1.37$

Per Method 1, one ABET-equivalent semester credit hour would be 1.37

STEP 2: Use Method 2 to verify the result from Method 1

$186 / 1.37 = 136$ which is considered within the typical range of a 4-year bachelor's degree in the US

Scenario 2: The program provides a Table 5-1 showing 368 ECTS of the entire required curriculum (5 years of study) equivalent to 216 SCHs by using 1.7 ECTS to 1 SCH. Students are in class 16 weeks/semester, for 10 semesters.

STEP 1: $368/160 = 2.3$

Per Method 1, one ABET-equivalent semester credit hour would be 2.3

STEP 2: The institution claims 368 ECTS are equivalent to 216 SCHs, which is considerably more than a typical four-year or five-year undergraduate program per the table under Method 2. Also, the institution adopts a 1-SCH/1.7-ECTS ratio which is quite different from the commonly used 1-SCH/2-ECTS ratio **or** the 1-SCH/2.3-ECTS ratio from STEP 1. Engage your Editor and Adjunct for input. If necessary, your Adjunct will request additional feedback from a third-party opinion.

Important Notes

- **Calculating Semester Credit Hour Equivalency is only one aspect of determining compliance with Criterion 5.**
- **Content of courses/curriculum must also be considered as required by Criterion 5.**
- **Method 1 and Method 2 should be used together as a 2-step process.**
- **This 2-step process is for internal use only by the reviewers and must *not* be shared with institutions or programs being reviewed as the “answer”.**
- **Each program should provide their institution’s conversion rationale in their SSRs. If not in the SSRs, please request it.**
- **Each team should examine the institution’s rationale based on their own knowledge and experience.**
- **The institution’s conversion rationale should apply consistently across all their programs under ABET review regardless of the commission.**
- **If admission to the program under review requires a level of preparation in math and basic sciences that is usually covered within a college curriculum in the US, your team may consider taking that into account regarding evaluating C5 compliance.**

Questions? Contact Your Adjunct for Guidance