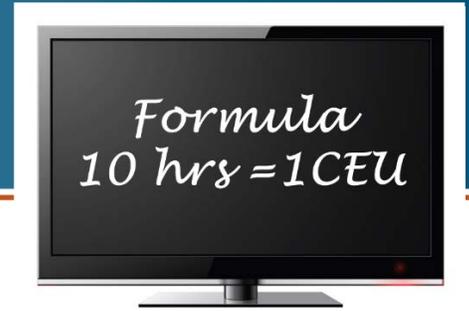


# The Continuing Education Unit How to Calculate CEUS



## Introduction

One continuing education unit (CEU) equals 10 contact hours of learner interaction with the learning activity content, 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 CEU purposes, 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.

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

*IACET coined the term  
CEU in 1970.*

## Counting Hours Toward CEUs

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 as shown in 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 equates to 1.7

CEUs; a three-contact hour program equates to .3 CEUs.

Contact time (hours) = (total minutes for all activities) – (total minutes spent on non-allowable activities) 60

\*Number of CEUs = Contact time (hours) 10

\*Rounded to nearest tenth

Figure 1. CEU Calculation Formula

*When calculating CEUs be sure to only count activities that are allowed.*

### **Activities Not Included When Calculating CEUs**

Breaks, non-working lunches, group pictures/awards ceremonies and other non-instructional contact time are not allowable when calculating CEUs.

### **Activities to Include When Calculating CEUs**

The following learning activities are examples of activity types 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**—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/Quizzes/Written Assignments**—Learner assessment and program evaluations.
- **Outside Assignments**—Field trips, projects and assignments, which are an integral part of a course or program, may count toward contact hours; however, a standard number of hours should be assigned using the averaging method, following the conduct of a comprehensive pilot as discussed in self-paced programs discussed later in this document. If contact hours are assigned for the purpose of calculating CEUs, the sponsor has the responsibility to validate each learner's assignment completion.
- **Laboratory Assignments**—Laboratory assignments tend to be an integral part of a planned program and are generally more structured than field experiences. Because 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 a considerable variation exists in lab conditions and time required for completing 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 are similar to extracurricular assignments and provide learners opportunities to gain practical and realistic experiences, which cannot be acquired in a classroom

*Activities that are not structured or associated with the learning outcomes are not usually valid for CEUs.*

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 checklist form 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 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 later section titled Self-Paced Programs.

### **Activities for Which CEUs Are Not Intended**

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

- **Academic Credit Courses**—Accepting IACET CEUs for college credit; this 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.
- **Committee Meetings**—Participating in committee meetings and activities.
- **Entertainment and Recreation**—Attending cultural performances, entertainment or recreational activities unless they are an integral part of a planned course, which meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **Individual Scholarship**—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**—Participating in programs delivered through the mass media (e.g., television, radio, newspaper), unless these presentations are an integral part of a planned course, which meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.

*CEUs for self-paced programs should be calculated based upon a pilot of the learning event with an appropriate number of participants.*

- **Some Meetings, Conventions, Exhibitions**—Attending meetings, conventions and exhibitions, which attract large numbers of participants, involve different activities and are conducted primarily for information sharing purposes. Planned learning activities within such events that meet the ANSI/IACET Standard are eligible for CEUs.
- **Travel**—Traveling or participating in a travel study program, unless the educational component of the travel study program meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **Unsupervised Study**—Participating in individual, self-directed study or other form of independent learning experience not planned, directed and supervised by a sponsor.
- **Work Experience**—Performing on-the-job training and other work experiences unless the work experience is structured as part of a planned and supervised continuing education experience that meets the ANSI/IACET Standard.
- **Youth Programs**—Participating in 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 illustration provided herein.

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 program completion, five individuals are selected to complete a pilot program. Each pilot program participant represents the typical learner who will attend the learning event. Each participant records the actual amount of time spent completing the program.

- Learner #1: 16 hours
- Learner #2: 10 hours
- Learner #3: 8.5 hours
- Learner #4: 12 hours

*Accredited providers should have a process to determine what they will and will not include in CEU calculations.*

- Learner #5: 14.5 hours
- (5) Learner 61 hours = 12.2 hours

The decimal .2 is rounded off to 12 hours and becomes the standard for course A. Therefore, 1.2 CEUs are awarded to those who satisfactorily complete the course. Satisfactory completion might be based on the satisfactory completion of all assignments.

It is important that the person(s) responsible in the organization for calculating learning event CEUs monitor 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. Calculating CEUs should be consistent and accurate at all times to ensure learners are receiving the appropriate number of CEUs.