

Online Learning Resource:
Student Engagement Time



Introduction:

Calculating student engagement time for an online course is often challenging. The following four questions express the interrelated variables of this topic.

1. What kind of tasks contribute to student engagement time for online learners?
2. Is there a minimum requirement or guideline for student engagement time in an online course?
3. What is the student engagement time expectation per week for students in my online course?
4. As the instructor, how can I calculate how much time my students will need to complete the coursework assigned?

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1. What kind of tasks contribute to student engagement time for online learners?

Student engagement time includes all tasks and activities that engage students in their learning. Examples include recorded lessons and lectures, readings, online discussions, assignments, assessments, research, and engaging with other types of curated content determined as germane to the learning.



2. Is there a minimum requirement or guideline for student engagement time in an online course?

Fitchburg State University uses the New England Commission of Higher Education’s definition of the academic credit hour which provides a basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time students can expect from their classes and coursework. The guideline suggests that each credit corresponds to a minimum of 3 hours of student engagement per week for a traditional 15-week course.



3. What is the student engagement time expectation per week for students in an online course?

When enrolled in a 3-credit course offered in a 15-week semester, students can expect approximately 9 hours of student engagement time per week.

Figure 1. Student engagement time for a 3-credit course.

Semester format	Total hours per week	Total hours per course
15-week	9	135
7-week	19.30	135
5-week	27	135



4. As the instructor, how can I calculate how much time my students will need to complete the coursework assigned?

The [coursework load estimator tool](#) estimates the total task time and the total time needed to complete specific learning tasks. Considering students vary in ability, experience, and motivation, it is important to recognize the output of this calculator as an estimate as the tool arrives at totals using these [key assumptions](#).



References:

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