



## Identifying Contact Hours in Higher Education

00:10–00:28

**Drew Coletti:** Hello, everyone. The topics of this episode of the T teaching is Contact Hours. The host for today's episode from the Fox School of Business Department of Online and Digital Learning is instructional designer Shawn Ponder. Our host interviewed two faculty members from Temple University, Dr. Kelly Grace and Mary Conran get their take on today's topic.

00:28–01:02

**Drew Coletti:** Here's what you need to know about contact hours, credit hours, the basic unit of the academic credit one semester credit is equivalent to roughly one hour of faculty instruction time per week for 15 weeks, which includes one week for exams. This also includes a minimum of 2 hours of out of class student work each week per credit hour. An equivalent amount of work is required for other academic activities, such as laboratory work, internships, practical student work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

01:02–01:19

**Drew Coletti:** Dr. Kelly Grace joined Temple University as an adjunct professor in 2017 after teaching at Georgia Institute of Technology and Texas Christian University. Currently, she serves as the director of Temple's online Master of Science in Human Resource Management Program.

01:19–01:25

**Kelly Grace:** The students sit through presentations where they're very likely to as soon as they're done They've checked out.

01:25–01:45

**Drew Coletti:** Mary Conrad and serves as associate dean for academic programs and curriculum, where she is tasked with oversight and direction of academic programs across the BBA MBA, MSC programs. She also serves as the professor in the marketing department of the Fox School of Business, where she is responsible for the development and presentation of undergraduate and graduate marketing courses.

01:45–01:51

**Mary Conran:** I would trust the instructional designers as well. We're very fortunate here that we've got great instructional designers.

01:51–01:54

**Drew Coletti:** Thank you for listening and please enjoy the episode.

01:59–02:06

**Shawn Ponder:** Welcome to this episode of T in Teaching. Today I am joined by Kelly Grace and Mary Conran. Thank you both for joining us.

02:07–02:09

**Mary Conran:** Thank you. Glad to be here.

02:09–02:10

**Kelly Grace:** Yeah, excited to be here. Thank you.

02:11–02:16

**Shawn Ponder:** We're going to jump right in with what, our contact hours. And why are they important?

02:17–02:44

**Mary Conran:** Well, they've kind of come to the forefront recently because they're related to the delivery modality. Usually the university required a 15 week semester. We knew how many hours the students were meeting, and it was just a calculation. These are standards actually set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education that Temple complies. But with the change in delivery modalities it put this at the forefront of discussions, whether you're doing a compressed format or an online format or flipped course format.

02:45–03:09

**Mary Conran:** That has brought this into to the discussions more often than we expected. So it's a little bit of a challenge because people have misconceptions on what is a contact hour. And so it's important as directors of programs, as faculty, we understand what these contact hours are. And we also need to explain that to students because it's something different than just merely homework.

03:10–03:23

**Mary Conran:** It's particularly taking a look at contemporary education. It's the idea of a flipped classroom doing work deliberately to build and enhance knowledge, as opposed to refining knowledge, which is more of a homework base.

03:23–03:45

**Kelly Grace:** Right. It's I think about it as well as what we used to do in class in 15 weeks is a contact hour. So anything that I would have done in a traditional format that counts and the requirement is that for three credit class, 37 and a half contact hours.

03:45–04:10

**Kelly Grace:** Right. So what would I have done in a real class or only format in class? Yes. I would have I would have lectured on resource class. And that's why you get into the classroom where we're all really at lectures. I would have had discussions and I would have shown to the results. I might have had guest lecture class.

04:10–04:33

**Kelly Grace:** I might have had an attached in the old days before technology. We would have been all of our testing in class where I might have had presentations, individual presentations, So as we think about contact hours, as you're moving to these other modalities one of the kind of groundings is what would you have done in that 15 week format?

04:33–05:00

**Mary Conran:** In a traditional format. So the general rule of thumb and people don't like to use that word of rule of thumb, but there is actually a scheme set up by the University for based on the number of credit hours, how many contact hours need to exist. So most of our business courses and three credit hours. 13 weeks. That's 45. But then you say, well there's holidays and other things so that 37 and a half should not be an issue, right. For a traditional format delivery format.

05:00–05:14

**Shawn Ponder:** Right. So a lot of times we get questions about like the distinction between homework and contact hours. Can you talk a little bit about that? I know you gave a few examples but do you mind diving in just a little bit deeper between the two?

05:16–05:41

**Mary Conran:** Yeah. The content is actually the learning sharing of the information, the building of the knowledge, the the approaching, the application and synthesis part of it. Whereas homework really is more

refinement, more rehearsal, more practicing for expertize. So it's something that students do on their own. It's not actually learning the content. It's practicing the content. So they're there's where the big difference is.

**05:41–06:01**

**Mary Conran:** And so when you take a look at something like a case analysis, you would have some difference here. If the students are actually doing a case analysis, that's an application and synthesis exercise. That would be a. And it could be used as an assessment. But it's also a contact hours, particularly if they're doing it collaboratively. And the instructor keys in on on point.

**06:01–06:14**

**Mary Conran:** So asking questions either through a discussion board or video chats or whatever. That would be a way that you could do cases as contact hours, not as homework.

**06:14–06:40**

**Kelly Grace:** Contact hours. I'm sorry. Homework also includes preparation. So reading, reading and my area, we do a lot of reading and leadership and in human resources. What are the current practices when you come to class and do the application where you go to group discussion and do a case or a conversation so that preparation time is the council's homework component in running classes.

**06:40–07:03**

**Kelly Grace:** It may be that there is a video, a TED talk that I want students to review. It's as as particularly interesting or intriguing or new content. If I were doing a traditional format class, I would still have them do it outside of class. It's just not worth my time. Right? To to have them prepare that. So do that in class.

**07:03–07:14**

**Kelly Grace:** So I would have them do that as homework, as preparation. And that's, that's the big difference for me is as I keep my frame in that, what would I do? Face to face.

**07:14–07:16**

**Mary Conran:** Yes. It's more contextualizing the learning.

**07:16–07:19**

**Kelly Grace:** It actually is. Yes,

**07:19–07:55**

**Mary Conran:** I think there might also be differences in what constitutes homework versus contract hours based on discipline. You know, reading a stats textbook. Yes, that's preparation. But also it's it's the acclimation of knowledge, the building of knowledge and then what the instructor will do with the students once they get to class, we can prep might be a little bit different. Same thing with finance or any other methods. But I agree for many of the qualitative courses, those readings are critical for preparing the students, priming them for the critical activities that do happen when we're Face-To-Face.

**07:55–08:38**

**Mary Conran:** So even in an online class, we're meeting with students in person. Yes. So, whether it's an hour or 2 hours, whatever it may be, we can then use that time most effectively because they prepared to work right in some of the lower-level courses in the BBA core. A lot of that is related to the Pearson or the Connect product. Students do the readings and they do some quizzes and their knowledge base just kind of like their auntie to get into the class rather than and then really an assessment. It's not an assessment of their knowledge is just are they ready to have a conversation about it? And that allows us to be more impactful in the classroom. Whatever the delivery modality is of students have been prepared. So that that homework is very critical.

**08:39–08:57**

**Shawn Ponder:** I agree. I completely agree. And you know what? That kind of ties into a little bit about what you do in your classes. Like I know Mary, you do voice thread and I know Kelly, you've done like seven and 14 classes and develop that. Can you talk a little bit specifically like what do you do in your class or even just talking about the voice as well?

08:58–09:19

**Mary Conran:** Yeah, I use voice for it as a way of continuing the discussion because my classes are online, although I have used it in my in-person classes at all, and we're always running out of time, running out of runway, I say, but I want to have application discussions with my students. I use voice read to this, so I'll create voice freight as just a tool that is compatible with canvas.

09:19–09:40

**Mary Conran:** As our as a learning platform, I create a series of PowerPoint and I have an intro video, and then I'll provoke a question. I'll, I'll ask something and have students not only respond to me, but also respond to another learner. And then I'll say Okay, well, you probably said this. I can anticipate I've taught the class enough and then ask them a follow on question.

09:40–10:12

**Mary Conran:** So you just mentioned Apple. Many of you just mentioned Apple. How does Apple actually do this and are there flaws? So I can continue a discussion and then I can go in and jump in during the week and say, oh, that was a great, really great comment. Sean. But what about this? And what I really find great is, particularly in the graduate level courses, students will bring in content externally, so they'll bring in specific experience from their workplace or they will find content examples of real companies doing what we're talking about in class.

10:12–10:26

**Mary Conran:** And that makes for a much richer experience. That's mimicking what I would have done in the classroom. So that would count as contact hours as opposed to, you know, answer this one question and move on. That would be a little bit more like homework.

10:26–11:14

**Kelly Grace:** And sometimes I call it when I'm at sometimes I think of discussion boards that are poorly done as posted homework and that's not the intent behind group discussion. We use a lot of discussion boards to emulate the kind of conversation we would have in play in a real class. Sorry, I did it again! In a live traditional course. So it is thinking about ways to emulate that. Perhaps you one of the things I do is provide students the opportunity to post a video and start of writing comments that some students prefer that formality and it looks like life, but make sure you get in there as the instructor and provide some commentary, some moderation and pull that conversation into the classroom.

11:14–11:36

**Kelly Grace:** Yes. And or pull that conversation into the classroom. I want instructor who begins his class with aha aha. Key learnings or new content, new related content. And we've talked about, well, let's move that to a discussion board. They can look at it, they can see what the others have had, and then you can pull those what you would normally do right in the traditional classroom.

11:37–11:57

**Kelly Grace:** Just go ahead and do that outside and bring in a couple of the key points. So those are incredibly effective. Those can be very effective, very helpful for the students having smaller discussion board groupings can be very effective in a class of 35 it may be hard for the student to find out, to think through, Okay, what can I truly add to this conversation?

11:57–12:24

**Kelly Grace:** So keep those groupings small and campus has great functionality for that. And another idea is for group projects, one of my favorites for group projects. And even if I was teaching in a traditional format, I would do this. Okay, guys, you're going to all present your group presentations online. Love it, post it, everybody before class. You're looking at those presentations or reviewing them.

12:24–12:48

**Kelly Grace:** You're going to make some comments provide some feedback, right? What question didn't they answer right? Next, do you want how does your content relate to theirs so that when we come into class, the presenting group already has an idea of how to keep conversation going. I don't want to repeat themselves and I don't have to have the students sit through presentations where they're very likely to learn as they're done.

12:48–12:56

**Kelly Grace:** They they've checked out. Bless their hearts! It improves the overall outcome of the product being produced.

12:56–13:33

**Mary Conran:** But you bring up this interesting issue of permeability and fluidity of it. It's not really one component discretely it's a compliment. They should all be complementing what we're trying to do with your overall objectives of the course. And something Sean asked earlier was this idea of having the same course and 15 week versus a seven week format or whatever and how we can kind of dovetail that and I've done that several times with one of my courses and it's a challenge because I feel sometimes as if I'm not giving enough attention to the smaller class, the shorter term class

13:33–13:55

**Mary Conran:** And so I've come up with some of these tools and I thought, You know what, that works really well with my full semester course I do. And it seems like it because it really compartmentalizes what we're trying to achieve. And again, they don't look at it as homework, but they are willing to invest their time in it. And I get better outcomes on assessments I do. They feel much more connected to the content.

13:55–13:58

**Kelly Grace:** You know, I think this whole idea, it's a learning of the course objectives.

13:58–13:58

**Shawn Ponder:** Yes.

13:58–14:16

**Kelly Grace:** We've kind of lost track of that in our focus on this very narrow area of contact hours. But ultimately that's what's driving the course and the modalities and the content is that we're trying to achieve those course objectives no matter how much it's so important that we keep those in mind, no matter what we're doing.

14:16–14:18

**Shawn Ponder:** Right. And tie the work back to the class.

14:18–14:21

**Kelly Grace:** You have to have it tied back to that.

14:21–14:21

**Shawn Ponder:** Right!

14:21–14:40

**Mary Conran:** Well, it's kind of like with Google Maps you say you want to get somewhere. There's seven different ways you could get there. You want to pay toll, right? Or whatever. So trying to imagine that. And also

that helps us with universal design for learning as well when trying to consider this what students might prefer as a way of demonstrating proficiency.

**14:40–14:50**

**Mary Conran:** And so it helps these these conversations are all interconnected, but it helps us reimagine what could be done for content. And it keeps it fresh, keeps refreshing.

**14:50–15:16**

**Shawn Ponder:** Mm hmm. All right. So let's just say you have a faculty member. They are falling a little short on some of their contact hours. We're kind of running into that a little bit right now and trying to give some more ideas. I know you talked a little bit about that, but do you have any advice for them for those faculty members that are just running just a little bit short of that of that contact or they'll contact hours?

**15:16–15:45**

**Kelly Grace:** Yeah. First of all, take a deep breath. Okay. I like to I like to include a short video each week that I don't post until the week. And it's just a 15, 15, 20 minute look. This is what we did last week. This is what's coming up this week and how this is how what I want you to get out of these components is, is why a sign of this and this is where I hope we will be.

**15:45–16:23**

**Kelly Grace:** I expect us to be at the end of this coming week. So kind of set the stage for them to help them with the road, the roadmap of how are these things connected. I think it's very easy to week one week to yes and not and lose sight of that big picture without that without those connective tissues. And like Mary, I often find myself at the end of class with insufficient runway to make those nice transitions. And so that's one of the things that spreads very softly, very gently can add a little bit of value. Right?

**16:23–16:25**

**Shawn Ponder:** Yeah, I agree with you.

**16:25–16:36**

**Mary Conran:** And it can also make the class very contemporary because you bring in examples from the week from the week classes, usually Monday night and then invariably Tuesday morning, I'm like, Oh, that's what I was just talking about in class.

**16:37–17:04**

**Mary Conran:** So that's a great way to pull that in. And, you know, I would trust the instructional designers as well. We're very fortunate here that we've got great instructional designers and so be open to. There might be a different way to get something done. One of my go to strategies is since I teach marketing and the interaction of marketing and supply chain is I'll go to how something is made and I'll say, Okay, here, here's a five minute video on how jeans are made.

**17:04–17:21**

**Mary Conran:** Let's talk about just make me an inventory list. Of all the items that go into making a pair of jeans and what that timeline might look like. So it's not an operations management part of it, but just trying to think about that. Yes. And then I can say in class okay, so somebody came up with an item list of 14, somebody else that's 74.

**17:21–17:42**

**Mary Conran:** So let me be honest, justice is just as a conversation starter, but it would be an activity where they would have to stop and really think about applying. So I think in any discipline, there's ways of doing that to have them think more proactively about the content again, more of a higher level learning, not rehearsal, which is, which is what homework's for.

17:42–17:43

**Shawn Ponder:** Yeah, I agree with that.

17:44–18:09

**Kelly Grace:** Yes. I look for things that I would do in a in a traditional class. So when I would first form groups, I would be walking around the room checking that you're on talk on target. Yeah. It looks like you've got the assignment. It seems like. Yes, everybody present. So I have added to a couple of my classes and I require meant for a video of your first group meeting.

18:10–18:36

**Kelly Grace:** Organizational meeting. I don't need to know that. You don't need to do any research before this I want to know that you're getting started. Well, so I'll just take a picture. Just video your first meeting. Think of me as a fly on the wall and and submit it. I'll review them. I it's a low stakes assignment, but it lets me engage with them, and it looks like you're on the right track.

18:36–18:55

**Kelly Grace:** Did you think about this? Hey, don't forget to give yourself time and your project plan to use new video to edit. And so I find that's helpful to students. And again, something that I would have done to help in a riot in a traditional classroom. Oftentimes the online students don't have as much access to.

18:55–18:55

**Shawn Ponder:** Right.

18:56–19:22

**Mary Conran:** And so I recently saw a version of that model where, in addition to the video, the instructor asked for project plan yes and action items within the next section items before the next check in, who was responsible for it. And so that that made like a template so the instructor could more easily say you're here's what I think you're missing or here's some opportunities, particularly for an undergraduate class.

19:22–19:22

**Kelly Grace:** Yes. Yes.

19:23–19:24

**Shawn Ponder:** That's very helpful.

19:24–19:26

**Kelly Grace:** Incredibly important, right?

19:26–19:26

**Mary Conran:** Yeah. Yeah.

19:27–19:59

**Shawn Ponder:** And it helps students not to wait to the last minute. Exactly. Yes. And if there is like a group, remember this slacking a little bit you'll know right away. Okay. So I'm glad you even mentioned that about the having the requirement of having students to record their meeting, their group meeting because a lot of times professors will think that group work is consider the contact hours. But it's just the way that you handle that right. It's for the most part, it's considered homework, correct?

20:00–20:00

**Kelly Grace:** Yeah.

20:00–20:08

**Shawn Ponder:** And that's what we try to convey to them to like is I'm glad you talked a little bit about that. Make that a requirement and then provide that feedback.

20:08–20:37

**Kelly Grace:** Right. And again, I know very few instructors who are going to devote full classes so that this group can effectively perform. Yes. So yeah, just think about I keep going back to that. That grounding is what would you do and how would you use your time? Well, in a full time, yeah, you would get a few minutes of time, right. The group to get together and to interact when you would dedicate the entire right where you were exactly. Would find another way to happen. Exactly.

20:37–20:51

**Shawn Ponder:** And again, that's what we call like the little gray area sometimes. But also sometimes professors want to count what they do in class as contact hours. But that can't do that, right? Like, that's double counting.

20:52–21:15

**Mary Conran:** Right? Good plan. Time is counting the place of contact time, right? So if you're doing a seven week course, you're meeting 2 hours a week, that's 14 hours as a baseline for contact. And we're trying to fill the bucket up to 37 and a half or ideally a little bit higher because some people might go through the contact a little bit that they content a little bit faster. So try to buffer in there.

21:15–21:23

**Shawn Ponder:** Yes. And so like that's separate from that 37 and a half, like the contact each week is separate and so that.

21:23–21:26

**Mary Conran:** It's Included in. it gets included as part of it. It's the base.

21:26–21:33

**Kelly Grace:** 37 and a half plus the 14 that you writing brings you 23 and a half if my math.

21:33–21:35

**Kelly Grace:** Oh I'm. Sorry, I should have been more clear.

21:35–21:36

**Kelly Grace:** That's okay!

21:36–21:53

**Shawn Ponder:** I meant like, yeah because I don't want anybody listening to this to be confused at all. No, I just kind of was like restating what I was saying. Like how sometimes like what you do in class, that's just a class time right mask. Thank you!

21:53–21:53

**Kelly Grace:** Yeah. Got it!

21:54–22:05

**Shawn Ponder:** Also with in-class quizzes versus quizzes outside of class, which counts for contact hours and which does not like. Can you speak a little bit about quizzes?

22:07–22:15

**Kelly Grace:** We need King Solomon for this don't I don't think it's all that hard. Yeah, well, I'll go back to my grounding.

22:15–22:18

**Mary Conran:** Yeah, it's debatable. It's debatable.

22:18–22:41



**Kelly Grace:** What would you have done in class if you had your traditional 15 week term? What would you have done in class? Right. You're going to give your major test in class because that's how we have traditionally done it. So if you've got a test, I think where would get the gray area is what reading question, right? And I've had some instructors I know in a real in a in a regular term and a traditional term, I would have done it in class.

22:41–22:41

**Shawn Ponder:** Right, right.

22:42–22:46

**Kelly Grace:** They would not have given multiple attempts. They would not have given multiple times.

22:46–22:47

**Kelly Grace:** Right. Right.

22:47–23:08

**Kelly Grace:** So and so I think there is some there is some individual discretion in how they would have handled it. But that's all that's allowed. I mean, minor all homework because they're based on the reading and this is just a double check that you read. But if I'm giving a test, then the test time would count as contact time. Yes.

23:08–23:16

**Mary Conran:** Yeah. Again, setting up the parameters in whatever delivery mode it's being done that would determine whether or not it's contact hours.

23:16–23:26

**Mary Conran:** Absolutely. Now, is there anything else like that you've come across, like maybe conversations with professors or just anything else you want to speak about as it relates to contact hours?

23:28–23:49

**Mary Conran:** Oh, I feel like doing a quote from Pirates of the Caribbean. I love it. Right the university has the standard. Yes. These are the guidelines. There's a little there's a little ambiguity there if someone doesn't exactly hit 37 in practice, not in by design. By design, it should hit that standard. And actually, as I said, a little bit above that.

23:50–24:19

**Mary Conran:** But in practice, if it's a little bit below, they're merely guidelines are things that we should be aspiring to be like. And that's why it's so important that as we're doing this review of who contact ours, we see that there. How much of the bucket still needs to be filled, because if it's a large gap, right, then something structurally needs to be done to that course design if it's marginal, there are things very easy to put in there. So yeah.

24:19–24:20

**Shawn Ponder:** Love it. Yeah.

24:21–24:55

**Kelly Grace:** I think the other the only other thing that I would say is to start early and work with your instructional design. Yes. If you have if you have that resource. Yes. Because there's all kinds of ways to do this in a way that is helpful for the students and gives them what we have. Right, ethically right. But ethically requires us to give that right of a course that meets its course objectives as well as provides that 37 and a half hours of contact. So it's kind of like an architectural structure that's designed to provide that. Yes.

24:56–25:24

**Shawn Ponder:** Well, I think we have covered a large part of contact ours. I think that if there is a faculty member that needs that advice, you'll provide great advice for them. So thank you so much. And also thank you so much for your time today and explaining what contact hours are the difference between homework and contact hours. Talked a little bit about group work and also the importance of tying your work back to your course objectives. And keeping things fresh.

25:24–25:24

**Mary Conran:** Yes.

25:25–25:28

**Shawn Ponder:** You know, so I love all the advice

25:28–25:29

**Mary Conran:** It should be to the center.

25:29–25:36

**Shawn Ponder:** Yes. Should be learner center. Yes. And also take a breath I love that. Like just breath!

25:36–25:38

**Kelly Grace:** Sometimes you just need a breath.

25:39–25:41

**Shawn Ponder:** Just need a breath. So thank you again for your time.

25:41–25:42

**Kelly Grace:** Thank you!

25:42–25:42

**Mary Conran:** Thanks.