

Policy on Credit Hour

Under federal regulations effective July 1, 2011, both institutions and accrediting agencies are required to come into compliance with regulations regarding the definition and assignment of credit hours under Section 600.2 and 600.24.

Under federal regulations, all candidate and accredited institutions are responsible to comply with the definition of the credit hour as provided in section 600.2, which defines the credit hour as:

Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than –

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

As required by Section 600.24, the Commission will evaluate as part of all comprehensive reviews the extent to which institutions meet the federal definition by reviewing:

- (1) The adoption of a policy on credit hour for all courses and programs at the institution;
- (2) The processes the institution employs to review periodically the application of its policy on credit hour across the institution to assure that credit hour assignments are accurate and reliable;
- (3) Any variations in the assignment of credit hours to assure that they conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

In implementing this policy, Commission evaluation teams will review institutional documentation including the institution's policy on credit hour and expectations at each degree level, evidence of the implementation of institutional review processes to assure the reliability and accuracy of credit hour assignments in all courses and programs, and through sampling, a variety of course credit assignments based on degree level, academic discipline, delivery modes, and types of academic activities.

Evaluation team findings will be included in reports to the Commission and where deficiencies are found, they shall be so noted, and the Commission will act to assure that these deficiencies

are addressed through follow up reporting and additional monitoring. If the Commission finds significant noncompliance with this policy regarding one or more programs at the institution, the Commission will promptly notify the Secretary of Education in addition to any follow up mandated by the Commission.

In addition, credit hour assignments shall be included as part of the reviews conducted by the substantive change committee as part of its review process. Additional protocols for implementation of this policy may be developed to assist institutions and teams in conducting reviews under this policy.

Approved by the Commission – Sept. 2, 2011