Policy Title: University of West Florida Definition of Credit Hour

Originator: Dr. George Ellenberg, Vice Provost

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost

I. Reason for Policy/Purpose:

The United States Department of Education as well as the University's regional accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), requires institutions of higher education to define the credit they will award for student work, and accrediting agencies are required to review the institutions’ policies and procedures for determining and applying its credit hour policies.

Who Does this Govern and Who Needs to Know this Policy?

All employees and students of the University of West Florida.

II. Definition of Relevant Terms:

(A) Clock hour (34 CFR 600.2 Definitions): A period of time consisting of (1) A 50-to-60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; (2) A 50-to-60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period; or (3) 60 minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

(B) Credit Hour (34 CFR 600.2 Definitions): 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.

(3) SACSCOC interpretation of Federal Standards (1) and (2) above. The following quote is the SACSCOC interpretation of the federal definition of a credit hour:
An institution is responsible for determining the credit hours awarded for coursework in its programs in accordance with the definition of a credit hour for Federal program purposes. The definition does provide some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework.

(a) The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.
(b) A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.
(c) The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
(d) The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.
(e) In determining the amount of work the institution’s learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
(f) To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
(g) Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.
(h) The intent of the above flexibility as provided by Federal guidance is to recognize the differences across institutions, fields of study, types of coursework, and delivery methods, while providing a consistent measure of student work for purposes of Federal programs.

(C) Modes of Delivery:

(1) Face-to-Face (“traditional”): A face-to-face course, also called “traditional” course, is a course that meets regularly on the main campus or at an off-campus educational site and may be supplemented with educational technology, including Internet-based technology, to enhance student learning.

(2) E-learning: An e-learning course is one which is fully online and completely delivered over the web with no in-class requirements. In this model, there is no physical classroom assigned although a professor may opt for students to meet for a proctored examination or course orientation, taking into account that some students
are remote and unable to come to the UWF campus. Accommodations will be made for such students.

(3) Hybrid/Blended: A hybrid/blended course is one in which a combination of strategies are used in a distance environment. A classroom will be assigned for hybrid students, but there will be reduced time spent in the classroom. Components of the course may include asynchronous online delivery, video or web conferencing or some other technological media for out of class time. Students will not only need to be able to get to class for in-class meetings, but also are required to have access to the Internet for web-based class meetings. This model works especially well if trying to utilize classroom space to the fullest. This is a very convenient approach for storing class materials, emailing students throughout the week between class meetings, storing URLs and other references, and for assigning interactive homework assignments such as participating in an online chat or threaded discussion.

(4) Videoconferencing: A videoconferencing course provides delivery through the Videoconferencing classrooms located on the main campus or other UWF instructional sites, and linking through video or web conferencing platforms out to the virtual video classroom for students who access via their computer.

III. Policy Statement:

The University of West Florida adopts the Federal definition of a credit hour as interpreted by SACSCOC (II)(B)(3). For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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:

(1) For face-to-face (traditional) courses, not less than one class hour (at least 50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester.

(2) For laboratory courses, internships, clinical practica, field work, studio work, and other academic work leading to academic credit, one (1) credit hour represents at least an amount of student work equivalent to that outlined in item 1 above.

(3) For independent studies, thesis, or dissertation research, one (1) credit hour represents at least an amount of student work equivalent to that outlined in item 1 above.

(4) For e-learning, hybrid/blended, and videoconferencing, one (1) credit hour represents at least the equivalent of the direct instructional time and additional student work as that outlined in item 1 above.
(5) For professional degree programs, the amount of direct instruction and additional out-of-class student work associated with one (1) credit is determined in accord with the standards of appropriate accrediting agencies and professional organizations but may not be less than the equivalent of that outlined in item 1 above.

In determining the amount of coursework to achieve learning competencies and outcomes, the University will take into account and consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

IV. Procedures: The Office of the Provost will develop all procedures necessary to carry out this policy.

Authority and Related Documents:

34 CFR 600.2 Definitions
Chapter 34 Federal Code of Regulations-Part 600.2: Definitions

34 CFR 668.8(k)
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=d344772794a30f9380942f083400c97b&h=L&r=PART&n=34y3.1.3.1.34#34:3.1.3.1.34.1.39.8

Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies

SACSCOC 2.7.1

SACSCOC 4.9

APPROVED: Dr. Judith A. Bense, President Date: April 16, 2014

History: Adopted April 2014 as an interim policy. Approved as a permanent policy following expiration of the comment period on May 16, 2014.