Preparing for the Credit Hour Review
What You Need to Know to Be Ready!

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Credit Hour Evaluation

BACKGROUND

• Commission policy and procedures effective January 1, 2012; no changes anticipated for 2017-18

• Response to federal regulations requiring accrediting agencies to ensure the award of academic credit by institution meets federal expectations
HLC Policy Key Points

1. GENERALLY, award of credit hours must conform to commonly-accepted practices in higher education

2. SPECIFICALLY, institutions must have:
   • Policies that determine HOW credit is awarded in keeping with the federal definition and common practices;
   • Processes that follow policies related to the awarding of credit
Credit Hour Evaluation

FEDERAL CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION

“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:
Permitted Approaches

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;

2) Or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit;

3) Or the equivalent amount of work.
Credit Hour Equivalency

EQUIVALENT AMOUNT OF WORK
1. Student work AND
2. Instructional Time

Verified by
1. Intended student learning outcomes AND
2. Actual student learning
Evaluation Overview

• Institution completes Federal Compliance Filing (report and worksheet)
  • Includes credit hour worksheet
• For credit hour, Federal Compliance Reviewer selects a sample of programs to review in greater detail
  • Focus on compressed format courses
• Reviewer reviews policies and their implementation and determines whether credit allocation is appropriate
Credit Hour Worksheet

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHEET

• Institutions distill information from multiple documents

• Provide the team with

  • An overview of the institution’s credit hour awards and
  • An explanation of the institution’s credit hour policy
Worksheet Basics – Calendar

- Reports institutional calendar, term length, type of credit
- Includes number of weeks and non-standard terms
- NOTE: Institutions may have multiple calendars and rolling entry
- NOTE: Institutions may have multiple terms within a semester or quarter
  - Some courses may extend full term
  - Some courses may be compressed
Worksheet Basics – Credit Allocations

• Reports total number of classes provided at each credit hour allocation (1-6 credits)
• Separates courses by delivery or course format from face-to-face through internships
• Identifies total number of class meetings provided during the term
• Identifies the length of time of each class or range of typical time (instructional time)
• Separates competency-based/direct assessment format
Worksheet Tips

Focus on

• full format versus compressed format courses
• courses offering six or more credits per term and reasoning behind those credits

Note inclusion of questions related to competency-based education and direct assessment related credit hour assignments

FEEL FREE TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE FORMAT AND PRESENTATION!
Worksheet Basics – Policy

• Indicates whether the institution has a policy related to the award of credit
• Reviewer note: Policies may exist at multiple levels, in departments, etc.
• Reviewer note: Policies need to explain all the various forms of credit hour allocations and to relate credit awarded to time in classroom, homework, etc.
Worksheet Basics – Credit Hour Generation

• Reports the credit load of a typical part-time and full-time student
• Reports number of students taking an overload
• Reviewer note: If large numbers of students have an overload, be prepared to include information on rigor of the programs and appropriateness of credits assigned
Credit Hour Worksheet

CLOCK HOUR REPORT

- Only for institutions with programs in licensed or vo-tech fields that require the tracking of clock hours
- Programs reported to the Dept. of Education for financial aid purposes in clock hours
- Reviewer note: Must determine whether credit hour allocations meet federal regulations OR whether to allow deviation
Credit Hour Misconceptions

• Do we need to review the entire curriculum and all credit hour allocations prior to the credit hour review?  (NO)
• Do we need to make sure we have a syllabus for every course and for every section?  (NO)
• Do we need to assign a permanent responsibility to an administrator for ensuring appropriateness of credit hour equivalencies?  (NO)
Reviewer Focus

POLICY(IES)

• Are they complete, appropriate, implemented?
  • Address credit hour allocations
  • Address range of delivery formats

• Do they follow federal credit hour definition?
  • Carnegie Unit approach OR
  • Equivalent amount of work
    • Intended learning outcomes
    • Verified by evidence of achievement

• Do they reflect good practice? Are they reasonable?

• NOTE: Policies may be at the state or system levels
Reviewer Focus

SAMPLE

• Traditional Credit Allocations
  • couple of programs at each degree level
  • range of disciplines

• Compressed Format/High Credit Allocation
  • most programs will require close review

• Check course description, schedule, syllabi
  • are the credit awards reasonable?
  • is the time in class, student work out of class, good practice in higher education?
  • does it comply with the institution’s policy?
  • what evidence is there of student learning or accomplishment?
Reviewer Determination

- Insufficiently detailed policies
  - Monitoring report (MR) – one year, require revised policies
- Ineffective application of policies
  - MR or Focused visit (FV) – review corrections to applications of policies
- Unreasonable credit hour allocations?
  - FV – review corrections to allocations
- Systematic problems across multiple programs or divisions?
  - CALL LIAISON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
Federal Compliance Review Update

- Federal Compliance information is being reviewed in advance of the visit by a trained Federal Compliance Reviewer
- Reviewer will do the credit hour review including the sample
- Reviewer will identify issues, if any, for further review by the on-site team
Tips for Successful Review

- Enlist help from the registrar and the financial aid director
- Develop detailed policies
- Complete the form well in advance of the submission date
- Keep your explanations concise and direct
- Make sure you have examined and can justify compressed format or high credit hour courses
Credit Hour Evaluation

QUESTIONS? ISSUES?
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