



Credit Hour Policy

Federal Definition of Credit Hour

In accordance with 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.

Federal regulations mandate that all candidate and accredited institutions comply with the definition of the credit hour as set forth 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.*

Institutional Fulfillment of this Policy

As required by Section 600.24, the Commission will evaluate as part of the *Resources and Capacity* (Year Three) evaluation the extent to which the institution meets 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; and
- (3) Any variations in the assignment of credit hours to assure that these variations conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

In implementing this policy, evaluation committees 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 consistency 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 committee 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. If the Commission finds systematic non-compliance with the policy regarding one of more programs at the institution, the Commission will promptly notify the Secretary of Education in addition to any follow-up required by the Commission.

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*** Title 34: Education CFR 668.8 (k) and (l)**
STUDENT ASSISTANCE GENERAL PROVISIONS
Subpart A—General

§ 668.8 Eligible program.

(k) *Undergraduate educational program in credit hours.* (1) Except as provided in paragraph (k)(2) of this section, if an institution offers an undergraduate educational program in credit hours, the institution must use the formula contained in paragraph (l) of this section to determine whether that program satisfies the requirements contained in paragraph (c)(3) or (d) of this section, and the number of credit hours in that educational program for purposes of the title IV, HEA programs, unless—

(i) The program is at least two academic years in length and provides an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, a professional degree, or an equivalent degree as determined by the Secretary; or

(ii) Each course within the program is acceptable for full credit toward that institution's associate degree, bachelor's degree, professional degree, or equivalent degree as determined by the Secretary provided that—

(A) The institution's degree requires at least two academic years of study; and

(B) The institution demonstrates that students enroll in, and graduate from, the degree program.

(2) A program is considered to be a clock-hour program for purposes of the title IV, HEA programs if—

(i) Except as provided in paragraph (k)(3) of this section, a program is required to measure student progress in clock hours when—

(A) Receiving Federal or State approval or licensure to offer the program; or

(B) Completing clock hours is a requirement for graduates to apply for licensure or the authorization to practice the occupation that the student is intending to pursue;

(ii) The credit hours awarded for the program are not in compliance with the definition of a credit hour in 34 CFR 600.2; or

(iii) The institution does not provide the clock hours that are the basis for the credit hours awarded for the program or each course in the program and, except as provided in § 668.4(e), requires attendance in the clock hours that are the basis for the credit hours awarded.

(3) The requirements of paragraph (k)(2)(i) of this section do not apply to a program if there is a State or Federal approval or licensure requirement that a limited component of the program must include a practicum, internship, or clinical experience component of the program that must include a minimum number of clock hours.

(l) *Formula.* (1) Except as provided in paragraph (l)(2) of this section, for purposes of determining whether a program described in paragraph (k) of this section satisfies the requirements contained in paragraph (c)(3) or (d) of this section, and of determining the number of credit hours in that educational program with regard to the title IV, HEA programs—

(i) A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction;

(ii) A trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction; and

(iii) A quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction.

(2) The institution's conversions to establish a minimum number of clock hours of instruction per credit may be less than those specified in paragraph (l)(1) of this section, if the institution's designated accrediting agency, or recognized State agency for the approval of public postsecondary vocational institutions, for participation in the title IV, HEA programs has not identified any deficiencies with the institution's policies and procedures, or their implementation, for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for programs and courses, in accordance with 34 CFR 602.24(f), or, if applicable, 34 CFR 603.24(c), so long as—

(i) The institution's student work outside of class combined with the clock-hours of instruction meet or exceed the numeric requirements in paragraph (l)(1) of this section; and

(ii)(A) A semester hour must include at least 30 clock hours of instruction;

(B) A trimester hour must include at least 30 clock hours of instruction; and

(C) A quarter hour must include at least 20 hours of instruction.

(m) An otherwise eligible program that is offered in whole or in part through telecommunications is eligible for title IV, HEA program purposes if the program is offered by an institution, other than a foreign institution, that has been evaluated and is accredited for its effective delivery of distance education programs by an accrediting agency or association that—

(1) Is recognized by the Secretary under subpart 2 of part H of the HEA; and

(2) Has accreditation of distance education within the scope of its recognition.

(n) For Title IV, HEA program purposes, *eligible program* includes a direct assessment program approved by the Secretary under § 668.10 and a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program approved by the Secretary under § 668.232.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a, 1070a-1, 1070b, 1070c-1, 1070c-2, 1070g, 1085, 1087aa-1087hh, 1088, 1091; 42 U.S.C. 2753)

[59 FR 22421, Apr. 29, 1994]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 668.8, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at www.fdsys.gov.