

Federal Requirement 4.9

The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (See Commission policy “Credit Hours.”) (Definition of credit hours)

Rationale and Notes

Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid. Because of the significance of the awarding of credit for coursework or experiences, an institution is obligated to ensure that credit hours awarded for courses and programs conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What is the institution’s definition of a credit hour?
- How does the institution define credit hour when it differs from commonly accepted practices in higher education? What are the criteria used?
- What is the process and criteria used by an institution that calibrates documented student learning to the amount of academically engaged time for a typical student?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable.

- Policy for determining credit hours awarded, including the definition of a credit hour used by the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Evidence that the institution consistently applies its definition in the awarding of credit for courses and programs
- Descriptions of processes and criteria used to award credit for courses and programs outside the commonly accepted practices in higher education

SOURCE:

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Second Edition: 2012, pages 99-100.