

**Academic/Administrative Policies**

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**Subject: CREDIT HOUR POLICY****1.0 Purpose**

The purposes of this policy are to

- a) define a credit hour at Alliant for the purposes of awarding academic credit and determining student eligibility for federal funding, and
- b) describe how Alliant will assure institution-wide compliance with its policy.

**2.0 Organizations and Constituencies Affected**

All academic units are governed by this policy.

**3.0 References with Relevant Language**

- 1.1 Department of Education *Dear Colleague Letter GEN 11-06: Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010*, in particular:
  - 1.1.1 Credit Hour - Federal definition: “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.”
- 1.2 WASC *Policy on Credit Hour*, in particular:
  - 1.2.1 “...the [WASC] 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.”

#### **4.0 Alliant Policy**

- 4.1 **Credit Hour: Basic Definition:** All work for which credit hours are assigned is designed to help students achieve competencies and learning outcomes specified in the course and is actively undertaken by students under the supervision of an Alliant faculty member, designated supervisor, or academic/professional mentor who verifies learning through evidence of student achievement. One credit hour at Alliant is defined as
- 1.a.) A unit of academic credit which reasonably approximates not less than three (3) hours of work per week by a student for one regular semester, or its equivalent for executive or short-session courses or other academic activities, for a total of 45 hours of student work, or
  - 1.b.) A level of student learning demonstrated to be equivalent to the learning taking place in item 1.a.) above, through the assessment of student learning and competency.
- 4.2 **Credit Hour: Application of policy to various types of courses:** The credit hour policy definitions and standards apply to all courses for which academic credit is given, including on-ground/face-to-face seminar courses, distance education and hybrid courses, practica/internships/field training/student teaching, supervised research/scholarship, laboratories or the equivalent, and independent study. Hours spent may vary by degree level, discipline, type of course, and type of assignments. The academic work for each course should reasonably approximate not less than the amount of academic work described below:
- 4.2.1 **On-ground face-to-face courses:** One credit hour represents a class that meets weekly for one hour of direct or indirect faculty instruction plus student engagement in academic learning and scholarship for two hours each week for the standard semester for a total of 45 hours, or the equivalent in alternate calendar courses.
  - 4.2.2 **Distributed education and hybrid courses:** One credit hour is consistent with the standards of face-to-face instruction: faculty instruction may be direct or indirect and students will be engaged in academic learning and scholarship for 3 hours per week for a total of 45 hours, or the equivalent in alternate calendar courses.
  - 4.2.3 **Practica/internships/field training/student teaching/professional practice:** Students often work full-or part-time in an internal or external setting in a supervised or mentored experience to assist them in achieving their professional practice competencies or learning outcomes. Credit hours will be assigned to these activities according to the duration, intensity, and academic level of the experience consistent with disciplinary standards and expectations.
  - 4.2.4 **Supervised research/scholarship:** One credit hour is the equivalent of 45 hours of student engagement in academic learning and scholarship with appropriate direct instruction, indirect instruction, and/or other facilitation by the supervising faculty member(s).
  - 4.2.5 **Laboratories or the equivalent:** For labs in which credit is assigned separately from the didactic portion of the course, one credit hour is the equivalent of 3 hours a week of student engagement in academic learning and scholarship for a total of 45 hours over the standard semester, or the equivalent in alternate calendar courses.

- 4.2.6 Independent study: One credit hour is the equivalent of 3 hours per week of student engagement with academic learning and scholarship with direct or indirect instruction from a faculty member for a total of 45 hours over the standard semester, or the equivalent in alternate calendar courses.
- 4.2.7 Other: any courses which do not fall within these categories should meet the standards in 4.1 above.
  
- 4.3 Responsibility for establishing credit hour assignment and expectations in courses: Programs are responsible for ensuring that course units are assigned in accordance with University policy.
  - 4.3.1 Syllabi for all proposed new courses should include an explanation of credit hour assignment in order to assure that the University Credit Hour policy is being met. Proposed new courses should indicate: the basis for the credit hours; total hours of direct and indirect instruction; and total hours expected of student engagement in academic learning and scholarship.
  - 4.3.2 Existing courses should be reviewed by the program director to ensure that they meet the credit hour policy and that evidence is available to support the credit hour assignments.
  
- 4.4 Policy monitoring: Alliant is required to monitor and evaluate the extent to which it is in compliance with its policy. This will take place in the following ways:
  - 4.4.1 Programs will be asked to report on actions taken to assure compliance with this policy in the Program Annual Reports beginning with the 2011-12 reports.
  - 4.4.2 Intensive Review Site Visit Teams will review a set of syllabi and documentation as part of the Intensive Review process beginning in 2012-13.
  - 4.4.3 School Curriculum Committees will develop and work with the Dean to implement monitoring procedures as part of their ongoing responsibilities to ensure programs' compliance with the credit hour policy on an ongoing basis and between program Intensive Reviews.
  - 4.4.4 As necessary, the Provost's Office will select a small number of courses and request documentation from the programs to support the assignment of units.

## **5.0 Definitions**

- 5.1 Carnegie Unit: a time-based, rather than outcome based academic measure of how long a student studies a subject. Originally based in secondary school, this measure is now used at the post-secondary level and is understood to mean the equivalent of one hour of class time per week over a semester, plus two hours of student work outside of class.
- 5.2 Class Hour: A class hour is a class meeting for a minimum of 50 minutes of direct or indirect instruction.
- 5.3 Direct Instruction: Explicit teaching of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions through lecture, didactic questions, supervision, mentoring, and feedback directly to the student(s). May be provided face-to-face or electronically mediated.
- 5.4 Indirect Instruction: Student centered instruction involving student inquiry and investigation, peer-led group discussions, problem solving, case studies, and student or group presentations. May be provided face-to-face or electronically mediated.

- 5.5 Student Engagement in Academic Learning and Scholarship: For the purposes of this policy, student engagement in academic learning and scholarship is defined as time spent outside the formal classroom on activities required to achieve competences and learning outcomes leading to the earning of academic credit, including required readings, studying, completion of assignments or papers, research or scholarship (thesis, dissertation, capstone), and development of portfolios.

## **6.0 Responsibilities**

- 6.1 Deans: Deans are responsible for ensuring that all programs within their Schools are implementing the Credit Hour policy in accordance with University policy.
- 6.2 Program Directors: Program directors are responsible for ensuring the programs have policies and procedures in place for the accurate assignment of units for all courses in course syllabi and are collecting evidence of compliance that can be provided to accrediting agencies.
- 6.3 School Curriculum Committees: School curriculum committees are responsible for developing and working with the Dean to implement procedures to monitor and ensure that program syllabi for all courses adhere to the University's credit hour policy and that the courses as delivered conform to the policy between Intensive Program Reviews.
- 6.4 Faculty Members: Faculty members are responsible for ensuring that their courses are in compliance with University policy.
- 6.5 Provost: The Provost is responsible for working with Schools, programs, and/or faculty as needed to provide education, training, and related materials necessary to implement the policy, and for working with the Deans to monitor compliance with the policy.

## **7.0 Procedures**

- 7.1 The procedure used to evaluate compliance with the Credit Hour Policy will involve the following steps:
- 7.1.1 The Program Annual Report Form will gather information regarding program compliance with the Credit Hour Policy beginning with the 2011-12 Report
  - 7.1.2 Intensive Reviews will review programs' compliance with the credit hour policy beginning in 2012-13.
  - 7.1.3 The Provost's Office, as necessary, will spot check compliance with the policy after the implementation of the policy since Intensive Reviews will not have taken place for all programs until a 6-7 year cycle of reviews is completed.
  - 7.1.4 These materials will be archived for review by external agencies, as required.

## **8.0 Appendices**

None

## **9.0 Revision History**

N/A