

## **Credit Hour Report Guidelines**

### *Background*

Minor variations aside, the Carnegie definition of an academic credit hour has long been the standard for institutions of higher education. On July 1, 2011 the federal government articulated its own variant (§ 600.2), required that all institutions adopt a definition which is consistent with it, and required that accrediting agencies evaluate institutional compliance with the new definition as part of the re-accreditation process (§ 600.24.f). The University of Redlands Catalog definition governing the award of credit already meets the requirements of the regulation: “*One unit of semester credit is awarded for the amount of work an average student would accomplish in a minimum of 40 hours (undergraduate) and 45 hours (graduate), including the hours spent in the laboratory or classroom*” (pp. 31-32). This policy exceeds the minimum standard imposed by the new regulation, despite variation in semester lengths across the three units of the university.

So that WASC can fulfill its obligation of evaluating compliance, they have urged institutions to incorporate into the Program Review process a review of credit hour accuracy and reliability. Therefore, in fall 2011 the Committee on Academic Planning and Standards (CAPS) directed the Educational Assessment Committee (EAC) to develop this credit-hour review and embed it into the existing Program Review process; the motion passed by CAPS requires programs to evaluate at least a significant sample of their syllabi in order to demonstrate compliance with the University of Redlands policy on credit hour. In spring 2012 the EAC added the following language to the Program Review Guidelines:

Approximately three months prior to the deadline for submission of the self-study, the program will provide the Office of the Provost with a report on program’s compliance with University Credit-hour policy (see *Catalog*.) Guidelines, including a reporting form, are available from the EAC.

This document supplies those guidelines and a template for the report.

### *Purpose*

The Credit Hour Report serves two purposes. In aggregate, all individual programs’ reports provide the evidence of institutional compliance with the federal mandate. Individually and within the context of the Program Review process, this report is one of many resources for the program’s own reflection and planning which goes into the self-study. For that reason, the report is to be completed prior to the submission of the self-study.

### *Report Guidelines*

A program undergoing review must complete and submit to the EAC a report on their assignment of credit hour no later than three months prior to the deadline to submit the self-study. The actual date will be set during the initial meeting with the Office of the Provost to develop the self-study plan.

*Sampling Courses.* The program must collect a sample of representative syllabi to evaluate. That sample must include at least:

- Twenty total syllabi or syllabi for all courses offered within the last two academic years, whichever is less;
- Syllabi for the three courses with the largest average enrollment over the previous four semesters;
- Syllabi for five or all (whichever is less) different classes taught at each class level offered (e.g., 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600);
- Syllabi for any course that every student must complete to receive the program's degree(s);
- Syllabi for any course offered by the program that every student must complete to receive another program's degree;
- For programs that employ master syllabi to guide adjuncts, at least three of the master syllabi;
- For programs that employ adjuncts and permit them to develop their own syllabi, at least one syllabus taught by every adjunct offering a course in the last four semesters;
- Syllabi for two different classes taught in the last four semesters for every full time faculty member in the program.

*Estimating Hours.* For each course represented by the syllabi in the sample, the time required of a typical student to succeed in the course should be estimated. The meanings of "typical" and "succeed" in this context are at the program's discretion. A template provided by the EAC assists with this estimation as well as the program's compilation and analysis of the estimates. To complete the template, you will want to consider factors such as the following: How many hours is a typical, successful student present in class? For each of the course's different types of out-of-class activities (readings, writings, problem sets, interviews, rehearsals, etc), how much time would a typical student invest in order to succeed? From this information, the template will generate summaries for average hours required for the program courses as a whole, for each level of course, etc.

*Analyzing Results.* For the purpose of demonstrating the university's compliance with the federal mandate, once credit hours for all courses in the sample have been estimated, the program should review the results and identify any significant discrepancies between estimates

and University policy and any trends in such discrepancies. If any courses do not meet the credit hour policy of the University of Redlands, the program should identify how this problem will be remedied for each course. If all courses meet or exceed the University policy, the program should briefly explain how it plans to maintain compliance during the next five years. For the purpose of informing the program's self-study, you may also wish to look for other trends such as significant variations according to course level or correlations between credit hours for courses and assessment findings for the learning outcomes that those courses promote.