

Policy and Procedures for Credit Hours

Reference: SACS Commission on Colleges **Federal Requirement 4.9**

Purpose of the Policy:

The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement states, “Implicit in every Federal Requirement mandating a policy or procedure is the expectation that the policy or procedure is in writing and has been approved through appropriate institutional processes, published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and implemented and enforced by the institution.”

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.

This policy is designed to ensure compliance with Federal Requirement 4.9 of *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, and to ensure that Lincoln Memorial University, and each of its academic programs, operates within its mission and consistent with good practice in higher education. LMU’s mission specifically expresses a, “commitment to quality instruction at every level.” Institutional Goal #3 declares that the University seeks to, “Provide quality educational experiences that have their foundation in the liberal arts and professional studies, promote high personal standards and produce graduates with relevant career skills to compete in an ever-changing, increasingly global market.” Strategic Goal #1 is to, “Assess and enhance academic quality.”

This policy is intended to document existing procedures and practices for determining credit hours awarded for all courses and programs, regardless of degree level or mode of delivery, at Lincoln Memorial University.

Policy

Lincoln Memorial University operates on the semester system and has adopted the federal definition of a credit hour. In accord with federal regulations, Lincoln Memorial University defines a credit hour as 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:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or;
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, clinical experiences, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

This credit hour policy applies to all programs at all academic degree levels (graduate, professional, and undergraduate) awarding academic credit (i.e., any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the University) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, online, blended, lecture, seminar, and laboratory. Credits are awarded on the basis of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete, in a traditional classroom based course delivery system, over a traditional semester. Academic Schools and Colleges within the University are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy.

Note: For professional programs accredited by the Department of Education recognized accreditation associations, the University follows generally accepted practices for determining credit hours established by the recognized program accreditation association.

Procedures

The expectation of student engagement/work necessary to attain the expected learning outcomes for each course credit is equivalent for all formats of a course whether it is fully online, a blend of face-to-face contact with some content delivered by electronic means, or one delivered in lecture or seminar format. Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as research seminars, independent studies, directed studies, internships, practica, studio work, or any

other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, at a minimum, should have clearly stated learning objectives and expected outcomes and workload expectations that meet the standards set forth above. Regardless of the mode of course delivery, the amount of student effort/work required to earn credit must be consistent with the terms of this definition.

For classroom based courses LMU adheres to the Carnegie unit for contact time (750 minutes for each credit awarded). The Academic Calendar typically has a minimum of 750 minutes of instruction per credit hour. The standard meeting times for courses are a 50-minute, Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule and a 75-minute, Tuesday-Thursday schedule. For the standard 3-credit hour course, 2,250 minutes of instruction are required. The calendar is planned with a minimum of 42 Monday-Wednesday-Friday meeting days and 28 Tuesday-Thursday meeting days. This policy accommodates a mandatory examination period to be counted in the minutes of instruction. The University typically requires mid-term and final examinations that may add additional minutes of instruction, for every planned term in the Academic Calendar. Final examinations for 3 credit hour courses are typically scheduled for a minimum of two-three hours (longer examinations may be necessary for some courses). The calculation for summer sessions follows this same standard of 750 contact minutes for each unit of credit which means longer class meeting times over the course of the summer terms. Credit hours may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time (typically a semester), or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to the amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

The University maintains the official Academic Calendar on its website: <http://www.lmunet.edu/academics/calendar.shtml>. In addition, Academic Calendars are published in both the printed and online versions of the Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional Program Catalogs.

The Curriculum Committee of each College or School within the University is charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the University's credit hour standards. The determination of credit hours is made when a new course or a revision to an existing course is proposed. Each submitted syllabus is examined for contact time as well as for assignments and evaluation mechanisms. Following Academic College/School Review, the University's Academic Council is responsible for approving the amount and level of credit assigned to each course and program.

When a course may be taken for variable credit, the number of credits to be taken must be listed at the time of registration and cannot be changed during the semester.

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