

ACICS ACCREDITATION ADVISORY
October, 2012

UTILIZING THE FEDERAL DEFINITION OF CREDIT HOUR
FOR PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN TITLE IV, HEA
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

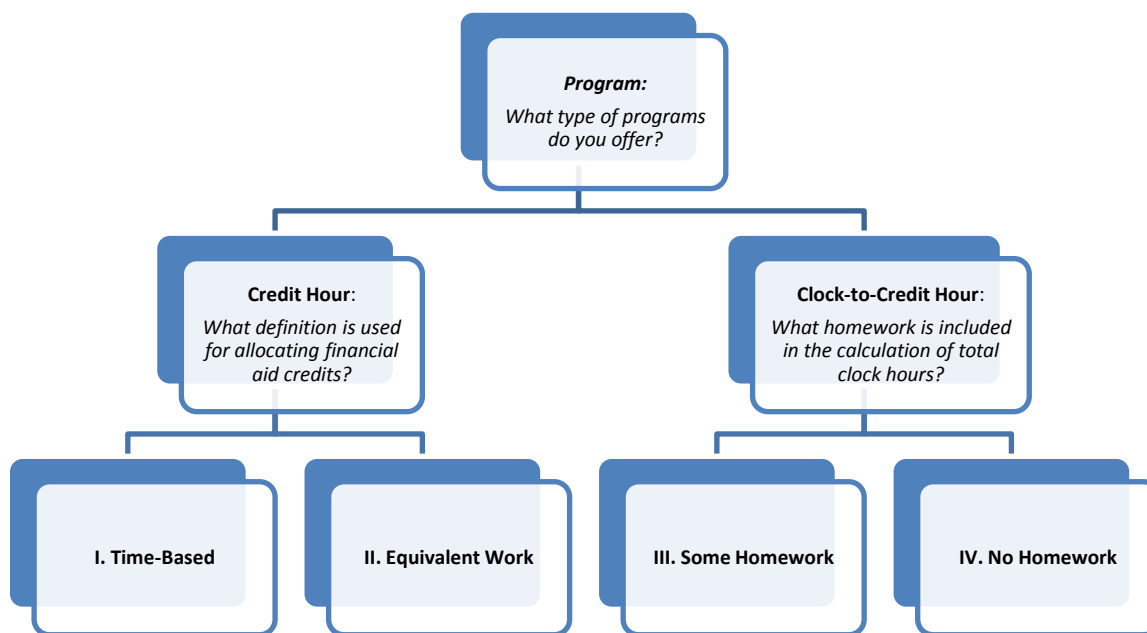
U.S. Department of Education regulations require institutions that participate in Title IV, HEA, student financial assistance programs to utilize, for purposes of allocating federal financial aid, the new federal definition of a credit hour. Section 2-2-503 of the *ACICS Accreditation Criteria*, which was effective as of July 1, 2012, includes this definition and is attached to this advisory. ACICS and other institutional accreditors are required by federal regulation 34 CFR, 602.24 to perform an effective review of institutional policies and procedures and their application to determine credit hour assignments for purposes of awarding federal financial aid. Accreditors must review the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit to courses and programs and must determine whether it conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

At its August 2012 meeting, the ACICS Council provided final guidance on implementation of Section 2-2-503 of the *Criteria*, which was shared with ACICS member institutions in the September 2012 Memorandum to the Field and AWARE webinar. Beginning with the fall 2012 visit cycle, ACICS on-site evaluation visits of participating or potential Title IV campuses will include a review of policies, procedures and their application to syllabi. The specific topics to be reviewed are summarized below. Detailed explanations are provided along with guidance, examples of how to comply with these requirements, and a glossary of terms utilized in this advisory. Examples are intended to be illustrative. Institutions are not required to use these examples as models and should develop documents that meet the needs and conditions of each campus, while including the required elements outlined below.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS

The requirements for compliance with the new federal definition of credit hour apply only to campuses that participate in HEA, Title IV, financial aid programs. For all Title IV campuses, these requirements include (1) a policy, (2) a procedure, and (3) statements on some course syllabi. The requirements differ in some details, depending upon the type of programs that are offered and the definition that is utilized for the assignment of credit for purposes of allocating federal financial aid. Detailed definitions, explanations, examples and a glossary of terms are provided in subsequent sections of this advisory.

Procedures for Assigning Credit Hours for the Allocation of Federal Financial Aid



Summary of Requirements Corresponding to Definitions for Assigning Credit Hours

- I. **If you use a Time-Based Definition for Credit Hour Programs, you must provide:**
 - a. A written policy (including the federal, time-based definition)
 - b. A written procedure (for calculating credit hours for allocating financial aid based upon the clock hours required for different types of classes, which ties to the most current Academic Credit Analysis)
 - c. Syllabi for lecture or direct instruction courses including all required elements (see the definition of Syllabus in the Glossary of the *Accreditation Criteria*), plus:
 - i. Homework assignments (demonstrating conformity with common practice)
 - ii. A list of assessments showing that homework is evaluated as part of the overall course grade (documented by a grading sheet or sample of graded assignments)
 - iii. A general statement regarding time-based requirements, including those for homework (documented by assignments demonstrating conformity with common or best practice, or by comparable assignments from similar courses at

other career colleges using the time-based definition of financial credit hours, or recommendations from textbook teaching guides, program advisory committees, or other subject matter experts)

II. If you use an Equivalent Work Definition for Credit Hour Programs, you must provide

- a. A written policy (including the federal, equivalent work definition)
- b. A written procedure (for calculating and documenting credit hours for allocating federal financial aid based upon equivalent work, which ties to the most current Academic Credit Analysis)
- c. Syllabi for lecture or direct instruction courses including all required elements (see the definition of Syllabus in the Glossary of the *Accreditation Criteria*), plus:
 - i. Homework assignments (demonstrating conformity with common practice)
 - ii. A list of assessments showing that homework is evaluated as part of the overall course grade (documented by a grading sheet or sample of graded assignments)
 - iii. A general statement regarding equivalent work requirements (documented by learning objectives in the syllabi and learning outcomes in the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP) demonstrating conformity with commonly accepted practice, or meeting the ACICS 70% standard for pass rates for licensure exams or other measures of student learning)

III. If you include some homework in the calculation of clock hours for Clock-to-Credit Hour Programs, you must provide:

- a. A written policy (including the appropriate clock-to-credit hour conversion ratio)
- b. A written procedure (for calculating credits for clock-to-credit hour programs with homework, which ties to the most recent Academic Credit Analysis)
- c. Syllabi for courses whose total clock hours include homework with all required elements (see the definition of Syllabus in the Glossary of the *Accreditation Criteria*), plus:
 - i. Homework assignments where required (demonstrating conformity with common practice)
 - ii. A list of assessments showing that required homework is evaluated as part of the overall course grade (documented by grading sheets or sample of graded assignments)
 - iii. A general statement regarding specified time requirements, including homework (which ties to the approved ACICS Profile of Clock-to-Credit Hour Conversion)

IV. If you do not include any homework in the calculation of clock hours for Clock-to-Credit Hour Programs, you must provide:

- a. A written policy (including the appropriate clock-to-credit hour conversion ratio)
- b. A written procedure (for clock-to-credit hour programs without homework, which ties to the most current Academic Credit Analysis)
- c. Syllabi for all courses, as usual, with all required elements except those for homework (see the definition of Syllabus in the Glossary of the *Accreditation Criteria*).

EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE OF REQUIREMENTS REGARDING POLICIES

1. **Written policies** – The campus should have a written policy statement for assigning credit for purposes of allocating federal financial aid that accurately reflects the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of a credit hour for credit hour programs and the exception for clock-to-credit hour programs (See Section 2-2-503 of the *Accreditation Criteria*).

Guidance – *It is recommended that the policy statement be included in the catalog. At a minimum, the statement should include the campus’ policies for:*

- a. *Definition of a clock hour (See Section 3-1-516(a) of the Accreditation Criteria)*
- b. *Use of a semester, trimester, or quarter as the unit of measurement for credit hours*
- c. *Classification of non-clock hour programs as credit hour programs, or as programs eligible for clock-to-credit hour conversion, or both*
- d. *Requirements for out-of-class assignments:*
 - i. *If the campus offers credit hour programs, include the general requirements of 2 hours of out-of-class work for each hour of class each week for the enrollment period, or the general requirements for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or both*
 - ii. *If the campus offers clock-to-credit hour programs, include the general requirements for out-of-class work (if any) up to 25% of the total hours of instruction for courses in these programs.*

2. **Sample Policy** – *This example is appropriate for a campus with semester [or quarter] enrollment periods, offering both credit hour and clock-to-credit hour programs that use both time-based and equivalent work models for out-of-class work. Campuses offering only one or two of the types of programs would modify the topics covered in the policy accordingly.*

Sample Policy Elements	Required Topic
A clock hour is equal to a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction.	Definition of a clock hour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Campus uses ACICS definition, Section 3-1-516(a)</i>
Credit for academic and financial aid purposes is measured in semester [quarter] credit hours.	Semester, trimester, or quarter term measurement for credit hour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Measurement of academic and financial credit hours must use the same term basis</i>
A semester [quarter] credit hour assigned to a credit hour course is equivalent to a minimum of 15 [10] clock hours of lecture, 30 [20] clock hours of laboratory, 45 [30] clock hours of externship/practicum, or a combination of these three. [OR, FOR CAMPUSES USING THE EQUIVALENT WORK MODEL:	Classification of non-clock hour programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Campus offers credit hour programs, using the</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Time-based model</i> ○ <i>Or the equivalent</i>

<p>A semester [quarter] credit hour assigned to a credit hour course is equivalent to the amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for which this amount of credit is awarded as a common practice in higher education.]</p> <p>Federal regulations allow some programs to convert 37.5 [25] clock hours of instruction and outside assignments, if any, to semester [quarter] financial credit hours.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>work model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Campus offers clock-to-credit hour programs</i>
<p>This definition also assumes appropriate out-of-class learning activities to support the credit awarded for lecture courses. Federal regulations for the allocation of student financial assistance for credit hour courses establish an expectation of two-hours of out-of-class work for each hour of lecture or direct instruction for which credit is awarded, or an equivalent amount of learning over a different amount of time.</p> <p>Federal regulations for the allocation of student financial assistance based on the conversion of clock hours to credit hours allow for the expectation of out-of-class work hours as established by the institution not to exceed 25% of the number of instructional hours. The expected hours of out-of-class work for each course are described on the appropriate syllabus.</p>	<p>Requirements for out-of-class assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Campus may use either time-based (1 hour in class, 2 hours out of class) or equivalent work model for different credit hour programs</i> • <i>Campus may also add out-of-class hours to its clock-to-credit hour courses, with exact amounts limited to 25% of the instructional hours and specified on individual syllabi</i>

<p><u>SAMPLE POLICY STATEMENT (for a Title IV campus allocating semester credit hours and offering both credit hour (using the time-based model) and clock-to-credit hour programs)</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CREDIT HOUR DETERMINATION</p> <p>A clock hour is equal to a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction. Credit for academic and financial aid purposes is measured in semester credit hours. A semester credit hour for credit hour courses and programs is equivalent to a minimum of 15 clock hours of lecture, 30 clock hours of laboratory, 45 clock hours of externship/practicum, or a combination of these three. Federal regulations also allow some programs to convert 37.5 clock hours of instruction and outside assignments, if any, to semester financial credit hours. These definitions also assume appropriate out-of-class learning activities to support the credit awarded for courses.</p> <p>Federal regulations for the allocation of student financial assistance for credit hour courses and programs establish an expectation of two-hours of out-of-class work for each hour of lecture or direct instruction for which credit is awarded.</p> <p>Federal regulations for the allocation of student financial assistance based on conversion of clock hours to credit hours allow for the expectation of a certain number of hours of out-of-class work as established by the institution not to exceed 25% of the number of instructional hours. The expected hours of out-of-class work for each course are described on the appropriate course syllabus.</p>

EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE OF REQUIREMENTS REGARDING PROCEDURES

1. **Written procedures** – The campus should have procedures that provide for an accurate and reliable application of the campus’ policy for determination of credit hours, as documented through the use of prescribed conversion ratios for assignment of credits to courses (See Sections 2-2-503(b) and 3-1-516 of the *Accreditation Criteria*).

Guidance – *At a minimum the statement should include a description of procedures for applying conversion ratios to determine the appropriate number of credits. The results should tie to the hours and credits listed on the most current Academic Credit Analysis form for each program and on the corresponding course syllabus:*

- a. *Time-Based Procedure for Credit Hour Programs*
 - i. *Divide clock hour totals for each course by 15/30/45 for semester or trimester credits (or by 10/20/30 for quarter credits) for lecture, lab and practicum courses or portions of courses in credit hour programs. Out-of-class hours are not included in this calculation.*
 - ii. *For lecture or direct instruction courses, ensure that the total number of expected hours of out-of-class work equals twice the number of class hours that are included in the calculation of credits*
 - b. *Equivalent Work Procedure for Credit Hour Programs*
 - i. *Assign the same number of credits as would be assigned to the courses in a credit hour program using the time-based procedure described above.*
 - ii. *Provide two forms of documentation for student learning in this program in the CEP and provide learning objectives in each syllabus that result in an equivalent amount of work (defined in terms of student learning) over a different amount of time (for out-of-class work)*
 - c. *Time-Based Procedure for Clock-to-Credit Hour Programs*
 - i. *Determine the number of out-of-class hours to add to each syllabus (from zero to 25% of the instructional hours) that supports the learning objectives of the course. The results should tie to the “Additional Outside Clock Hours” listed on the approved ACICS Profile of Clock-to-Credit Hour Conversion*
 - ii. *Divide clock hour totals (including any out-of-class hours) by 37.5 for semester or trimester credits or by 25 for quarter credits for clock-to-credit hour programs, and round down.*
2. **Sample Procedures** - *These examples are appropriate for a campus with semester (or quarter) enrollment periods, offering both clock-to-credit hour and credit hour programs that use both time-based (2-out/1-in) and equivalent learning models for out-of-class work. Campuses offering only one or two of the types of programs should modify the topics covered in the procedures accordingly.*

<u>Sample Procedures</u>	<u>Required Topic</u>
<p><u>Credit Hour Programs – Time-based procedure</u></p> <p>1. For lecture courses describe out-of-class assignments and summarize the expected hours of out-of-class work so that it equals twice the number of class hours that are included in the calculation of credits.</p>	<p><i>Time-Based Procedure for Credit Hour Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe out-of-class assignments and time requirements for lecture courses, if not already included in the syllabi
<p>2. Divide clock hour totals for each course by 15/30/45 for semester or trimester credits (or by 10/20/30 for quarter credits) for lecture, lab and practicum courses or portions of courses, respectively. Round down the resulting number of credits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine credit hour total
<p><u>Credit Hour Programs – Equivalent work procedure</u></p> <p>1. Provide two forms of documentation of equivalent student learning in the CEP and provide learning objectives in each syllabus that result in an equivalent amount of student learning</p>	<p><i>Equivalent Work Procedure for Credit Hour Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop documentation, if not already provided in the CEP
<p>2. Assign the same number of credits as would be assigned to the courses in a credit hour program using the time-based procedure described above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine credit hour total
<p><u>Clock-to-Credit Hour Program</u></p>	
<p>1. Adjust hours of instruction, as necessary, and determine the number of out-of-class hours to add to each syllabus (from zero to 25% of the total instructional hours) required to support the learning objectives of the course.</p>	<p><i>Clock-to-Credit Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add instructional hours and out-of-class assignments as necessary
<p>2. Divide clock hour totals for all forms of instruction (including any required out-of-class hours) by 37.5 for semester or trimester credits (or by 25 for quarter credits). Round down the resulting number of credits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine credit hour total

EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE OF REQUIREMENTS REGARDING SYLLABI

1. **Detailed Syllabi** – For lecture or direct instruction credit courses and clock-to-credit hour courses involving homework, the campus should have a detailed syllabus for each offering of each course that contains all of the elements required in Section 3-1-513(a) and the Glossary definition of a syllabus and, in addition, the following:

- a. Out-of-class work assignments that support the intended learning objectives of the course.

***Guidance** – The nature and scope of these assignments should conform to commonly accepted practice in the field or documentation should be provided as to how the assignments support the learning objectives and the expected time for completion. Assignments to review specific chapters, problems or reading materials are acceptable if they are limited in number and precede examinations or other evaluations.*

- b. The minimum amount of time a student is normally expected to spend completing the out-of-class work assignments for the course.

***Guidance** – Syllabi should include a general description of the expected out-of-class time that is required and should indicate whether that amount of time is in compliance with:*

- i. *The time-based credit hour definition (two hours of outside work for each hour of lecture)*
- ii. *The equivalent work credit hour definition (a discretionary number of hours per course resulting in evidence of student achievement documented by learning objectives on the syllabus and at least two program-level student learning outcomes in the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP) that demonstrate equivalence with commonly acceptable amounts and levels of student learning), or*
- iii. *The clock-to-credit hour definition (homework hours should tie to the “Additional Outside Clock Hours” listed on the approved ACICS Profile of Clock-to-Credit Hour Conversion).*

- c. A documented method for evaluating out-of-class assignments as part of the student’s overall course grade for which documentation has been provided.

***Guidance** – Syllabi should indicate how out-of-class learning is evaluated and how this evaluation is incorporated into the student’s overall grade. Documentation in the form of a grading sheet or, if the evaluation of homework is not listed separately on the grading sheet, a small sample of graded assignments (e.g., two graded assignments for two students) is required for each section of each course.*

NOTE: An equivalent amount of learning over a different amount of time is an important option for campuses to consider since it may not require increasing the number of hours of out-of-class work expected of students, even if those hours are currently less than twice the number of lecture class hours. This option involves review

of two pieces of information by program evaluators: (1) data for each program on student learning outcomes included in the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP), and (2) the learning objectives described in the syllabus for each lecture course.

2. **Sample Syllabus** - This example is appropriate for a 4 semester hour course in a credit hour program that uses the time-based model for out-of-class work. Campuses using quarter hour credits, courses that are part of other types of programs or courses assigned a different number of credits should modify the description of these topics accordingly. See notes for alternative statements of homework expectations.

Sample Syllabus Statement	Required Element
-	Course Name
-	Course Number and Description
-	Course Prerequisites
-	Instructional Materials/References
-	Course Objectives
-	Teaching Strategies
Students are expected to spend approximately six (6) hours a week, on average, completing homework assignments in order to achieve the learning objectives for this 15 week lecture course. This meets the Federal Government's expectation of two hours of homework for each hour of lecture.	Homework Expectation (required only for lecture courses or clock-to-credit hour courses where homework is included in the total number of instructional hours.)*
Instructional times and resulting credits are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 45 lecture hours (3 credit hours) o <u>30 lab hours</u> (1 credit hour) <p style="text-align: center;">TOTAL (4 Semester Credits)</p>	Instructional Contact Hours/Credits
In determining the student's grade, the following relative weights will be used along with the grading scale described in the Catalog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Tests and Quizzes 30% B. In-Class Projects 20% C. Homework Assignments 20% D. Midterm and Final Exams 30% 	Method of Evaluation
	Topic Outline
Week 1 Objectives: Instructor Activities: Student Activities and Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Chapter 1: Complete Review Questions, pp. 34-36 B. Chapter 1: Complete Exercises 1-16, pp. 37-40 C. Chapter 1: Homework: Complete Exercises 1-3, pp. 36-37 D. Chapter 1: Homework: Complete Questions, 1-4, p. 42 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Objectives • Instructor Activities • Student Activities • Out-of-Class Work Assignment
Week 2 Objectives: Instructor Activities: Student Activities and Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Chapter 2: Complete Review Questions 1-3, p. 79 B. Chapter 2: Complete Exercises 1-11, pp. 79-84 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Objectives • Instructor Activities • Student Activities • Out-of-Class Work Assignment

C. Chapter 2: Homework: Complete Exercise 1-4 (choose one), p. 84	
D. Chapter 1 & 2: Homework: Review Chapters for test	
Week 3, Etc. through Week 15	
Date Revised: October 2011	

**NOTE: This example is applicable to courses whose allocation of credits are based on the “time-based” model of two hours of homework for each hour of class that is included in the calculation of credit. Courses that base the allocation of credit on the “equivalent work” or the “clock-to-credit hour” model might describe the expectations for out-of-class work as follows:*

Students are expected to complete homework as assigned in order to achieve the learning objectives for this course. The intended learning outcomes of this course and the achieved learning outcomes of this program meet the Federal Government’s expectation of an amount of work equivalent to that in comparable courses and programs.	Homework Expectation (for credits based upon the <u>equivalent work</u> model)
Students are expected to spend at least twenty-three (23) hours completing homework assignments in order to achieve the learning objectives for this course. Together with direct instruction, the hours of homework meet the Federal Government’s expectation for conversion of clock to credit hours. <i>[For this example 23 hours of homework plus 92 hours of direct instruction equals a total of 115 clock hours of work which, divided by 37.5 and rounded down, results in the assignment of 3 semester credits to the course.]</i>	Homework Expectation (for credits based upon the <u>clock-to-credit hour</u> model. Homework hours must tie to approved ACICS Profile)

Application to Distance Education – The syllabi for courses delivered by distance education must include these same elements. However the homework expectation may be added to the expectation of other work and described in terms of the total amount of time devoted to out-of-class activities, since for a course that is not hybrid and therefore 100% of which is offered on-line, all of the activity is conducted outside of a classroom.

Students are expected to spend approximately nine (9) hours a week, on average, completing assignments in order to achieve the learning objectives for this 15 week, 3 semester credit, on-line course. This is equivalent to the Federal Government’s expectation for an on-ground course of two hours of homework for each hour of direct faculty instruction for a total of three hours of work per credit per week, for purposes of allocating federal financial aid.	Homework Expectation (for credits based upon a distance education model)
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Questions about ACICS’ Review of Institutional Credit Hour policies and implementation – Questions about the information in this advisory may be addressed to Ms. Susan Grier at sgrier@acics.org or to Dr. Thomas Wickenden at twickenden@acics.org.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE ACCREDITATION ADVISORY

Academic Credit Hours – Academic credit hours are those that are assigned by an institution for purposes of measuring the academic content of a course or program, according to the ACICS definition in Section 3-1-516 of the *Accreditation Criteria*. The ACICS definition of an academic credit hour is different from the federal definition of a financial credit hour, and the federal definition of credit for clock-to-credit hour programs differs from the definition of credit for credit hour programs. A course may be assigned both financial and academic credit hours.

Clock-to-Credit Hour Programs – This term is used by ACICS to refer to those programs that are neither credit hour programs nor clock hour programs, as defined in 34 CFR Section 668.8(k). They include undergraduate degree programs of less than two years in length and non-degree programs that are not fully transferrable to degree programs of at least two years in length (with at least two graduates) at the same institution.

Commonly accepted practice – Some of the information about out of class assignments, including the time that students are expected to spend on the assignments and the amount and level of intended and actual student learning outcomes, will be evaluated, per direction from the U.S. Department of Education, against a standard of practice regarding conformity with the expected time and resulting amount and level of student learning commonly found acceptable for this type of program at this credential level at similar institutions. Program evaluators will use their experience with course content and student achievement in programs in this field to judge whether the expected time spent on out of class assignments, the intended amount of student learning as described in each course syllabus, and the learning outcomes achieved by students in the program conform to common practice regarding acceptability for the assignment of credits. Documentation of acceptable levels of student learning may also be provided by Licensure Pass Rates that are in compliance with ACICS standards and other assessments of student learning, such as those on which a comparable percentage of students achieve passing grades.

This standard is related to other existing standards in the *Accreditation Criteria*. For example, the standard regarding the curriculum of a program at each credential level, beginning with Section 3-3-203, Curriculum, requires that “the curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other collegiate institutions” Generally speaking, if the program complies with this comprehensive criterion, it will be in compliance with the commonly accepted practice standard. If questioned, campuses may provide documentation of acceptable homework assignments and time expectations on two or more syllabi from courses in the same program at the same credential level at comparable institutions or as recommended in connection with commonly utilized textbooks or by other subject matter experts. Documentation of acceptable levels of learning can also be provided for similar measures for the same program at the same credential level at two or more comparable institutions.

Conversion Ratios – To assign credit hours, clock hours must be converted by a given ratio to credit hours. For purposes of allocating federal financial aid for students enrolled in credit hour programs, the federal definition requires use of a ratio of one clock hour of lecture or direct instruction a week for fifteen weeks (i.e., 15 clock hours) to one semester credit hour and one clock hour of lecture or direct instruction a week for ten to twelve weeks (10 clock hours) to one quarter credit hour. For a lab or practicum, ACICS requires the use of the ratios of 30 to one and 45 to one, respectively, for semester credit hours and 10/20/30 clock hours of lecture, lab or practicum to one quarter credit hour. For

students enrolled in clock-to-credit hour programs, the federal definition requires the use of the conversion ratios of 37.5 to one semester credit and 25 to one quarter credit. These clock hours may include out-of-class assignments not to exceed 25% of the hours of instruction. Therefore, 30 out of every 37.5 semester hours converted to credit must consist of instruction and 20 out of every 25 quarter hours converted to credit must consist of instruction.

Credit Hour Programs – These programs, as defined in 34 CFR Section 668.8(k), include degree programs of at least two (academic) years in length and shorter degree programs or non-degree programs that are fully transferable to degree programs of at least two (academic) years in length that are offered at the same institution and that have had at least two graduates.

Equivalent Work Definition – This term is used by ACICS to refer to the part of the federal definition of a credit hour which specifies “an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” The federal definition of a credit hour is “an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement...that reasonably approximates not less than—one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week..., or an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time” (emphasis added). Therefore ACICS interprets this definition to refer to an amount of intended and actual student learning that is equivalent to the learning that is intended and achieved in similar courses in the same program at other higher educational institutions over a lesser or greater amount of time than is expected for out of class student work in the time-based definition.

The time required for classroom or direct faculty instruction in calculating financial credit hours must equal or exceed the minimums required by ACICS for academic credit hours, so the decrease or increase in time referred to in this definition must be measured in terms of the hours of out-of-class student work each week. Intended learning is assessed in terms of the stated learning objectives in course syllabi and is verified by the actual learning achieved by students. Actual learning achieved by students is assessed in terms of learning outcomes reported in the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP). The standard utilized to determine equivalence is the minimum amount and level of learning that is commonly accepted in higher education as having earned the number of credit hours that are assigned to the course or program.

Financial Credit Hours – This term is used by ACICS to refer to credit hours calculated according to the federal definition of a credit hour for credit courses and programs in 34 CFR 602.4 or the exception defined for clock to credit hour courses and programs in 34 CFR 688.8(k) (l). These definitions are included in Section 2-2-503(a) and (b) of the *Accreditation Criteria*. These credit hours are calculated and assigned for purposes of allocating federal financial aid. They are distinct from academic credit hours as calculated according to ACICS definitions.

Student learning outcomes – All campuses are required by ACICS Criteria to include at least two learning outcomes in the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP). These data must be provided at the program level to document the accuracy of the Equivalent Work procedure for determining the credits assigned to the courses of that program. These data may include relevant measures of student learning such as

pass rates for licensure examinations, graded externships, graded portfolios, capstone courses, etc. The amount of student learning at the course level can also be inferred from the intended learning objectives that are described in the syllabus for each course.

Time-Based Definition – This term is used by ACICS to refer to the part of the federal definition which equates one credit hour to a reasonable approximation of “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...” This definition is sometimes referred to as the “Carnegie” definition or unit or the “one in/two out” definition. The part of the definition that refers to out-of-class student work is measured by ACICS in terms of the time that students are expected to spend, on average, to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. The reasonableness of this expectation is assessed in terms of its conformity to common practice in similar courses in similar programs in similar institutions of career education.

ACICS Accreditation Criteria

Section 2-2-503. Evaluation of Programs for Purposes of Federal Financial Aid. As part of its evaluation of an institution for initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation, ACICS will review the institution's policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments for purposes of awarding federal financial aid. ACICS will evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2 and in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), to courses and programs and will determine whether this assignment conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

a) Credit Hours for Credit Hour Programs. The evaluation of credit hour programs, as defined in 34 CFR 688.8(k)(1), for purposes of financial aid is based on the following federal definition of a credit hour:

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.

b) Credit Hours for Programs that are neither Credit Hour nor Clock Hour Programs. Clock hour programs as defined in 34 CFR 688.8(k)(2) may not assign credit hours for the purpose of awarding federal financial aid. However, undergraduate degree programs of less than two years in length and non-degree programs that are not fully transferrable to degree programs of at least two years in length (with at least two graduates) at the same institution are eligible to convert clock hours to credit hours for purposes of awarding federal financial aid. In doing so, these programs may seek to combine a minimum number of hours in a range of hours of student work outside of class with a required minimum number hours of instruction alone to meet or exceed a total number of clock hours of instruction. The evaluation of these clock-to-credit hour programs is based upon the following federal conversion formulas:

The institution's student work outside of class combined with the clock hours of instruction meet or exceed the following numeric requirements:

(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; and

The clock hours of instruction alone meet or exceed the following numeric requirements:

(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 a least 20 hours of instruction.