

NKU CREDIT HOUR POLICY AUDIT PROCESS

Northern Kentucky University recently developed and approved a course audit policy while preparing the SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report. To comply with SACSCOC Federal Requirement 4.9, an audit of course compliance with the NKU, Federal, and credit hour policies is required. Since reviewing the requirement, the Academic Council and the Provost approved an over-arching University audit process that places the responsibility for the course audit process to the Office of Curriculum and Accreditation (CA), with the audit results ultimately being reported to the Provost.

During the January-February 2014 period the CA office developed their internal processes for the course audit. The registrar provided a list of courses, spanning multiple course types and delivery formats, and unit loads to be audited during March-April. Additionally, during this time period the descriptions/definitions of different types of courses and instructional formats were clarified by the Academic Council and the University Curriculum Committee (the committee that reviews and approves courses at NKU).

OVERVIEW

The designation of 48 hours of academic work per semester is considered the standard to define a semester unit (1 credit hour). However, since the amount of student work per unit generally includes an estimate of student preparation and studying, courses that come within 10% of meeting that requirement (at least 43.20 hours of academic work) will be determined to meet the designated level of student work for one semester unit. Courses will be scheduled to allow 16 hours of lecture (one lecture hour is equal to 50 minutes). This standard applies to face-to-face courses and synchronous on-line courses. Each unit of credit is further assumed to generate a minimum of 32 hours (2 hours per week during traditional 16 week semester or equivalent) of additional outside-of-class work (e.g. study, exam preparation, etc.).

The following chart lists the required amounts of seat time, out-of-class homework for face-to-face courses and the required time for on-line, hybrid, and blended courses. Seat time for F2F sessions is equal to 50 minutes per session for class that meets 3 times per week, 75 minutes per session for class that meets 2 times per week, 150 minutes per session for class that meets 1 time a week, etc. These are minimum amounts of time and individual faculty may require additional assignments.

Credit Hour Unit	Required Instruction “seat time”	Required Out-of- Class Homework	Required Time for Out-Of-Class Assignments for On- line, hybrid, and blended courses
1 credit hour	16 hours (800 minutes)	32 hours (average 2 hours)	48 hours (average 3 hours)

		per week)	per week)
2 credit hours	32 hours – 1600 minutes	64 hours (average 4 hours per week)	96 hours (average 6 hours per week)
3 credit hours	48 hours – 2400 minutes	96 hours (average 6 hours per week)	144 hours (average 9 hours per week)
4 credit hours	64 hours – 3200 minutes	128 hours (average 8 hours per week)	192 hours (average 12 hours per week)
5 credit hours	80 hours – 4000 minutes	160 hours (average 10 hours per week)	240 hours (average 15 hours per week)
6 credit hours	96 hours – 4800 minutes	192 hours (average 12 hours per week)	288 hours (average 18 hours per week)

On-line and blended/hybrid courses are expected to meet the same standards as traditional face-to-face courses for “instructional” time. In these courses, contact with instructors may take place via various modes of distance technology.

CONTACT HOUR MONITORING

Primary monitoring responsibility for courses rests with the department chairs and/or academic unit administrators who have oversight responsibility for those courses. In cases where courses are overseen by a College Dean’s Office, responsibility will be held by the Dean or Associate Dean.

The Office of Curriculum and Accreditation provides support and assistance for monitoring academic compliance of the credit hour policy and will conduct the annual audit. Reports will be provided to the department, college, and provost.

New courses are evaluated by a process that includes: review by the department, college and academic committees (including University Curriculum Committee and other appropriate committees). The justification for assignment of the requested units for a course is evaluated on the definition(s) of a credit hour.

AUDIT PROCESS FOR ACADEMIC COURSES

Credit hour policy compliance for regular academic courses will be embedded in the charge of the College Curriculum Committees and the University Curriculum Committee (UCC). All new course proposals and proposals to change existing courses will include a review of whether the proposed course conforms to the credit hour policy. Beginning fall 2014, this review will be a formal part of the UCC review process and the committees will examine proposed course(s) to see if the required workload in a course seems in alignment with the units earned. Additionally, the Office of Curriculum and Accreditation will review all existing courses for credit hour policy compliance on an annual basis.

The audit process will include an examination of face-to-face, hybrid, blended, and on-line courses offered by the university to ensure they conform to the credit hour policy as well as best practices in on-line course delivery.

Seventy-five percent of the class sections will complete the short audit form, see attached. Twenty-five percent of the courses will complete the long audit form, see attached. The twenty-five percent will be selected by CA and will be a representative sample across all departments and colleges.

TIMELINE

The initial credit hour audit will take place in the spring 2014 semester prior to faculty leaving for the summer.

After the initial audit in spring 2014, the audit will occur annually during each fall semester.

AUDIT STEPS

Spring 2014 Baseline Data Collection

The registrar will provide CA with a complete list of all scheduled classes offered during the spring semester. The scheduled classes will be uploaded into Digital Measures. An e-mail request will be sent to every faculty member assigned to teach a class to complete either the short audit form or the more detailed audit form. Detailed instructions on how to complete each of the forms will be provided in the e-mail and also be available on-line.

Reminders will be sent to faculty members on a regular basis if the audit form has not been completed. The deadline for completing the form will be April 30.

During the second week of May, departments, deans, and the provost will receive a report listing the results of the audit. The report will list the college, term, course number and section, title, course type (lecture, lab, clinical), compliance status, and credit hours.

Fall Semesters

As outlined above, the same process will be followed each fall semester starting with the fall 2014 semester. Deadline for completing the form will be December 15. Reports will be provided to departments, deans, and the provost during January.