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## University Credit Hour Policy: *Provost's Guidance for Implementation*

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### 1.0 Guidance for Implementation of the University Credit Hour Policy

The spirit of the DOE's regulations (and HLC's related expectations) is that all students who engage in institutionally-required academic work should always have the opportunity to be awarded an amount of institutionally-defined academic credit commensurate for (a) the quantity of that academic work and (b) the quality of students' performance on/engagement in that academic work. **In other words: If students are required to do academic work, they should be awarded credit for it. And the amount of credit to be awarded must be consistent with SLU's Credit Hour Policy and the definition of a credit hour.**

**Accordingly, "zero-credit hour" courses are not allowed when those zero-credit course/program requirements ask students to engage in academic work consistent with the nature of academic work in credit-bearing courses.**

Example:

If a graduate program requires its first-year students to participate in a weekly, one-hour seminar designed to complement their other academic program requirements, and at which students will learn from and discuss program-related topics with the presenters and their student peers, students are, in fact, engaged in required academic work. Accordingly, student participation in the seminar should be codified via their enrollment in a credit-bearing course. If little to no related "homework" is required and the one clock hour per week is all that is required, that required seminar might best be codified as a .25 or .50 credit course – but it still must be a credit-bearing "course" requirement (either on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or standard grading scale) for all students.

Example:

A program requires the submission of a portfolio of previously-completed academic work that will, *as a portfolio*, be evaluated by program faculty separately from the academic work required of students in their "regular" credit-bearing courses. If the curation of the portfolio is purely perfunctory/"mechanical," requiring of the student no meaningful qualitative academic decision-making or rationale development for the portfolio choices, then that is truly a non-credit requirement.

But what if, to properly curate their portfolio, students are expected to engage in meaningful discipline-based/academic analysis and decision-making, or they need to author corresponding rationales for what was included, or they need to author reflections on what they learned from the creation or previous faculty evaluation of each selected artifact? In those cases, students are, in fact, being asked to engage in academic work. And that requirement for academic work should, per this policy, be codified formally in a credit-bearing course (again, even if just a "partial credit" course worth just .25 credits, or .5 credits, or whatever is warranted).

Historically, SLU academic leaders have created zero-credit courses to circumvent the charging of tuition associated with the awarding of additional academic credit for additionally required academic work. However, that obstacle can and should be addressed in two key ways:

1. Per the example above, programs may assign to such additional courses “partial credit” amounts (such as .25, .5, or .75). There is no institutional policy disallowing or restricting the use of such partial amounts. So if a requirement must be codified as a credit-bearing course but does not warrant even one full semester hour of credit per this University Credit Hour Policy, the program may (and should) assign an appropriate amount of credit less than one full credit.
2. It is standard practice to assign an equal number of “billing credits” as “academic credits” for all credit-bearing courses; in short, a standard three-credit course is “billed for” three credits of tuition. However, there may be program requirements that do not require true “academic work” and, therefore, do not warrant *any* billing credits. Academic units may request of the Provost that billing credits for such requirements be set at “0.” Approval would thus eliminate the tuition cost of the additionally-required “course requirement” for students.

Finally, a reminder that learning outcomes are required for all academic requirements that require student engagement in academic work; indeed, without such outcomes there would be no rationale for designing or mandating the requirement. Accordingly, there should always be some form of evaluation of student achievement of the associated learning outcomes to both (a) substantiate the credit (even if minimal) awarded on an individual basis and (b) determine the quality and impact of the required programming writ large.

## 2.0 Application of Credit Hour Policy for Distance Education Courses

Both SLU’s Credit Hour Policy and the U.S. Department of Education’s regulations governing it are agnostic regarding course delivery modality. In other words, both apply fully to distance education courses as well as in-person courses.

Comprehensive guidance regarding the implementation of SLU’s Credit Hour Policy in the context of distance education courses is available [via this link](#).