

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester hours or its equivalent unit. (*Program length*)

Rationale and Notes

The requirement reflects the generally accepted means of determining academic credit required for degrees in higher education. The requirement uses as its basis the semester credit hour or its equivalency. In instances where an institution relies on other means of determining "academic credit" other than semester hours, it must demonstrate that its approach adheres to generally accepted practices described by this Core Requirement. Additionally, an institution needs to justify any degrees that include fewer than the required number of hours.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the institution identify the minimum number of credit hours required for degrees at each level?
- What are the institution's policies and procedures related to the establishment of new programs and do they include reference to minimum length for programs at each level?
- If an academic unit other than semester hours is used, what is the unit equivalency to semester hours and how does the institution make this determination?
- How is program length established and monitored?
- How does the institution justify degrees that include fewer than the required number of hours?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

- Institutional publications describing approved degree program requirements at all levels (associate, baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional) that include the number of credit hours required for each degree
- If the institution's measure is not a semester credit hour, a description of any alternative approach deemed equivalent to a semester credit hour and an explanation of how it determines program length
- Justification of the length of a degree that includes fewer than the required number of hours

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Evidence of internal and external program reviews which include a review of credit hours required for each degree program
- A description of any unit that is the equivalent of a semester hour and how it determines program length
- Policy statements and/or board bylaws outlining minimum degree requirements

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Distance and Correspondence Education"

"Credit Hours"

"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions" (change from clock to credit hours)

"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"

"Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Federal Requirement 4.4

Federal Requirement 4.9

- 2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. (*Program content*)

Rationale and Notes

All programs offered by the institution are directly connected to its mission and to fields of study appropriate to higher education. In order to guide students through the continuous process of learning, the content of the program demands increasing levels of integration of knowledge. Coherence is a critical component of a program and should demonstrate an appropriate sequencing of courses, not a mere bundling of credits, so that student learning is progressively more advanced in terms of assignments and scholarship required and demonstrates progressive advancement in a field of study that allows students to integrate knowledge and grow in critical skills.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What evidence exists that the institution offers degree programs consistent with its stated mission?
- How does the institution ensure that a representative sample of its degree programs demonstrates coherence in sequencing, increasing complexity, and linkages between and among program components?
- How does the institution demonstrate that its programs are appropriate to higher education?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

- College/university publications listing courses required in each program offered, providing course descriptions, and course and program prerequisites

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Process for ensuring the coherence of programs and compatibility with the mission of the institution
- Information regarding degree requirements, residency requirements, and other experiences as part of a program
- Comparative data with similar peer institutions
- Rationale for programs and their suitability for higher education
- State mandates providing curriculum requirements and/or guidelines
- Sample of curriculum development and approval process resulting in a program review

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Distance and Correspondence Education"

"Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Federal Requirement 4.2