



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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March 26, 2018

President Peter Mitchell
Lake Superior State University
650 W. Easterday Ave.
Sault Sainte Marie, MI 49783-1699

Dear President Mitchell:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. A staff analysis of the report is enclosed.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on credit hour policy. No further reports are required on this topic.

Interim reports on enrollment and budget are due 12/3/2018 and 12/2/2020. A focused visit on program review and assessment of curricular and co-curricular activities is to be scheduled no later than 3/1/2019.

The Standard Pathway Year Four Comprehensive Evaluation is scheduled for 2020 – 2021. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2026 – 2027.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Steph Brzuzy (sbrzuzy@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 106.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: March 26, 2018

STAFF LIAISON: Steph Brzuzy

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: Lake Superior State University, Sault Sainte Marie, MI

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Peter Mitchell, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 3/1/2018 on credit hour policy.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation, which states:

"LSSU identifies a single policy that describes credit hour expectations for traditional face-to-face and laboratory courses. As well, expectations for independent study, seminars and compressed courses are clearly articulated. However, on-line and blended courses do not fit the existing descriptions. Related, a reviewed syllabus for an on-line course was not specific to the modality (the same syllabus for the FTE section is used).

The institution should expand its current credit hour policy or develop a new policy that includes all delivery modalities."

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Lake Superior State University (LSSU) interim report consists of a narrative describing the institution's efforts in reviewing and revising its credit hour policy and extensive appendices containing a range of supporting documents. These documents include the credit hour policies from other institutions reviewed by LSSU as one stage of its revision process. The report is clearly presented and thorough.

REPORT SUMMARY: The report's narrative provides an account of LSSU's review of its credit hour policy, which had been drafted in 2012, and subsequent revision. According to the report, the review began with the institution's registrar collecting credit hour definitions from other Michigan universities and continued with the preparation of a white paper that addressed the Federal Credit Hour definition and included an analysis

of the University's existing policy. Ultimately, the Provost's Council, the Academic Senate and other key governance bodies reviewed the policy draft, which was finalized in April 2017.

The revised policy was added to the public website in appropriate areas and to the 2017-2018 University Catalog. Embedded in the narrative portion of the report are the original 2012 iteration of the policy and the 2017 revision.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): **Federal Compliance pertaining to the institution's credit hour policy.**

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

REPORT ANALYSIS: The Lake Superior State University (LSSU) interim report provides evidence showing that the institution has adequately addressed concerns regarding the LSSU 2012 credit hour policy. The revised policy, which was formally adopted in April 2017, cites the Federal definition of the credit hour as the basis for the institution's revised, 2017 policy. The following is excerpted from the 2017 revision.

A [semester] 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 of 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 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 activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward to the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010)

<http://policy.hlcommission.org/Federal-Regulation/assignment-of-credits-program-length-and-tuition.html>

The revised policy, included in the report narrative, also contains sections on Types of Courses and Modalities of Course Delivery. The section on Modalities addresses specific concerns stated in the Team Report of the institution's 2016 Comprehensive

Evaluation, singling out both Blended and Online courses, among others—and noting *“The credits awarded for a particular educational experience will be based on the credit determination derived from the course type, irrespective of the modality for course delivery, including online and blended types.”*

Analysis Concluding Statement: The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the University's efforts pertaining to the revision of its credit hour policy and will not require additional reporting on this topic.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on credit hour policy. No further reports are required on this topic.

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