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

General 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 #1:

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 #2:

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).

On Thesis/Dissertation “Supervision” and Comprehensive Exam Preparation

If students are enrolled in courses in which they are instructed by faculty in ways that support their development/writing of a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, or in courses via which faculty help students prepare for graduate-level comprehensive exams, those courses should almost always be credit-bearing courses (regardless of the amount of credit awarded, or the amount of tuition charged).

If students are required to engage in meaningful academic work that is evaluated by faculty, that work should be codified in a credit-bearing course.

On Tuition Associated with Credit-Bearing Courses

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.

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](#).

Non-Credit Program Requirements

Consistent with the University Credit Hour Policy is the use of “Non-Credit Program Requirements”: requirements that do **not** require students to engage in qualitatively meaningful academic work, and that are **not** graded or evaluated in any qualitatively meaningful way – meaning no standard letter grade

(A, B-, C+, etc.) is awarded, nor is any grade of “S” (Satisfactory), “U” (Unsatisfactory), “P” (Pass), or “NP” (No Pass) awarded.

Completion of Non-Credit Program Requirements can be tracked in SLU’s degree audit systems when the Office of the Registrar is provided the pertinent information. Typically, you don’t need to create “fake” zero-credit courses to track Non-Credit Program Requirements. Please consult with the Registrar’s Office.

Examples of Non-Credit Program Requirements include:

- Regular or episodic attendance at a program-required speaker series or similar presentation(s) when students are not expected to produce any artifact of their learning from the presentation/series – and, therefore, no meaningful assessment of student learning is conducted.
- Assembly of a collection of student learning artifacts presented in a portfolio or similar manner when the student is not expected to engage in any meaningful qualitative academic decision-making or rationale development for their portfolio choices – and, therefore, no meaningful assessment of student learning about their portfolio choices is conducted.
- Taking an exam administered and required by a state or federal licensure board or accrediting body, or a SLU graduate program-administered “Comprehensive Exam.”
 - *NOTE: Faculty-designed and faculty-led study sessions or preparatory courses for any such exam should likely be created as credit-bearing courses because, presumably, they require student engagement in required, meaningful academic work that is/should be evaluated by faculty. If not, then they are Non-Credit Program Requirements.*