Monitoring Report on Credit Hours and Student Learning Outcomes

February 2017

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Submitted to:

The Higher Learning Commission
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SOUTHERN STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Institutional Context _____

Southern State Community College's comprehensive site visit for accreditation reaffirmation from the Higher Learning Commission took place in November 2015. Notice of the HLC Institutional Actions Council (IAC), delivered February 12, 2016, indicated the IAC had voted during the February 9, 2016 meeting to continue accreditation with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation scheduled for 2025-2026. Contingencies included a monitoring report on credit hours and student learning outcomes (Federal Compliance finding) due February 2017 as well as a monitoring report on assessment, student retention, persistence, and completion due November 2017. This document fulfills the required monitoring report for credit hours and student learning outcomes.

Within the "Institutional Policies on Credit Hours" section of the Federal Compliance Filing, the team noted non-compliance in regard to the credit hour policy alignment with student learning outcomes in non-traditional courses in alternative formats with less instructional and homework time than is typically expected. The comment stated, "Whereas the college's credit hour policy allows for the non-standard course credit hours, there was no evidence presented that the institution equates credit hours with student learning outcomes." All other items in that section were affirmed and, in section two, "Application of Policies," the review team confirmed the following:

- course descriptions and syllabi were appropriate and reflective of the credit hour policy,
- the learning outcomes were appropriate to the courses and programs, alternative delivery or compressed format course were appropriate and reflective of the policy,
- the learning outcomes were reasonably capable of being fulfilled, and
- the actual assignment of credit to courses and programs was reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice.

Concluding the section, the "Recommended Commission Follow-up" states, "Therefore, the institution should prepare a monitoring report for the Commission showing that it has created evidence that equates credit hours with intended learning outcomes and the student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe and utilizing the activities allotted for the course, as applicable."

The Commission's report was delivered to the institution two months after the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who was the principal lead in the accreditation process and host to the review team, accepted a promotion at a neighboring college. Upon hiring a new Vice President of Academic Affairs in mid-spring 2016, the institution has regrouped and begun the process of framing the Commission's feedback into actionable work to address the issues of non-compliance.

The College has opted for rigorous self-examination to strengthen itself in universally defining and applying the credit hour and aligning it with student learning outcomes. And, just as any thorough self-examination process typically reveals, there is ample room for enhancements beyond the scope of the individual finding. The College began by using the same syllabi sample reviewed in the Federal Compliance Filing and sorting through the commentary related to that sample to develop the improvement plan. In doing so, this monitoring report has contributed to broader conversations and action related to credit hour policies, syllabi consistency, faculty professional development, adjunct orientation processes, and teaching and learning excellence.

This report will summarize the College's approach to creating a more visible alignment between credit hours and student learning outcomes and the complimentary work that has emerged. It is organized in the following sections:

I. Policies and Practices Supporting the Integrity of the Credit Hour
II. Aligning the Credit Hour and Learning Outcomes
III. Continuous Improvement

Policies and Practices Supporting the Integrity of the Credit Hour

About the Credit Hour _____

Definition of a credit hour is necessary and appropriate given the substantial monetary investment surrounding its application. While the regulations around credit hours are grounded in commonly accepted academic practice, it is incumbent on the institution to demonstrate an equivalency that reasonably approximates some minimum amount of work expected to accomplish identified learning outcomes. In its most basic form, a credit hour is a unit of measure that gives value to the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements for academic course.

The Federal definition of the "credit-hour" provides several critical flexibilities in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework. The expectation is that credit hours assigned to courses for an amount of work are verifiable by student achievement of established learning outcomes. In addition to the important role of peer review of policies and practices that meet conventional academic expectations, the credit hour definition should also:

- Reasonably approximate the amount of work required for a course
- Avoid the prescription of classroom time versus out-of-class student work
- Acknowledge a "minimum" standard of work
- Consider learning outcomes in the context of alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, and academic levels.

Revising the Credit Hour Policy | Stage I _____

The review team affirmed that the College's policy on credit hours sufficiently addresses the institution's awarding of credit hours for all formats, relates the amount of instructional or contact time for various delivery methods, and is reasonable within the federal definition and within good practice. While this implies the policy is adequate, the College believes a revised policy may better contribute to broader understanding of demonstrated learning and its relationship to the "credit hour" if such narrative were more explicit in the policy. This is true particularly in the context of alternative delivery methodologies.

Southern State currently defines the credit hour as follows:

A credit hour is the academic unit received for taking a subject for one hour a week for one semester (laboratory sessions may be included or separate, depending on the course). In reference to college courses, the term "hour" is applied to all such credits.

To assist in reassessing the current policy the College turned to a comparison study to evaluate the current Southern State definition of a credit hour (Appendix A). Using the Federal and Ohio Department of Higher Education definition/policy as the basis, the College surveyed a selection of two-year colleges, select private four-year colleges, and the three top transfer public universities in Ohio. As a result of this analysis, the College is proposing a new definition of a credit hour. Using this analysis alongside the Federal Compliance finding, the College has drafted a policy that more visibly addresses learning outcomes and accounts for differing instructional methodologies. The Curriculum Committee anticipates approval of this policy during the March 2017 meeting. The policy would become effective Summer 2017.

Proposed SSCC Definition of a Credit Hour

In accordance with Federal and State definitions, Southern State Community College defines a credit hour as an equivalency that reasonably approximates one of the following:

1. A minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty instruction complemented by two hours of out of class student work each week, for approximately fifteen weeks, or an arrangement that yields the same ratio, in terms of credit to instruction and/or out of class work time.

    a. Such arrangements include online, hybrid, and accelerated courses in which the completion of an equivalent amount of instruction and student work is required, as stipulated in (1), but may occur over a different amount of time.

2. At least an equivalent amount of work, in terms of time spent, as required in (1) for other academic activities such as laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, or other academic work leading to the award of credit-hours.

3. In the case of courses that are delivered in independent study format, a credit hour is approximated by the demonstration of learning—as measured by performance on assignments and assessments—that is expected in the traditional in person or online delivery of the course.

Alternatively, the Southern State Community College approximation of the credit hour could be understood as the following:

Credit hours earned	In person, online, hybrid, and/or accelerated delivery of credit bearing course		Other academic experiences which are credit bearing
	In class requirements for the term	Out of class requirements for the term	
1 Credit	15 hours	30 hours	45 hours
2 Credits	30 hours	60 hours	90 hours
3 Credits	45 hours	90 hours	135 hours
4 Credits	60 hours	120 hours	180 hours

Although it could be argued that a policy adjustment was not the impetus for the review team's finding, the unique institutional circumstances surrounding understanding and application of credit hour alongside learning outcomes warrants the reconsideration. Further, when comparing existing policy to the proposed policy, it is evident that the proposed policy speaks specifically to the aspects of the review team's concern.

Current Definition		
	State Requirements	*Federal Requirements*
Classroom or direct faculty instruction	✓	✓
Out of class student work	**X**	**X**
Other course delivery formats	**X**	**X**
Alternative academic experiences	**?**	**?**
Proposed Definition		
Classroom or direct faculty instruction	✓	✓
Out of class student work	✓	✓
Other course delivery formats	✓	✓
Alternative academic experiences	✓	✓

✓ Direct Application   **X** No direct application   **?** Inferred application

Addressing Alternative Delivery Formats | Stage II _____

In addition to the specific examples that have helped inform the new policy proposal, Southern State also recognizes value in the expanded descriptions of how the credit hour policy is applied to various types of courses and instructional modes. Such examples can be found among other institutions, including those accredited by the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Among these illustrations are excellent

examples that would further reinforce the improvements Southern State is aiming to achieve. This is a second stage initiative and is something Curriculum Committee will return to in Fall 2017.

Of particular interest are those models which articulate specific examples of time estimates relevant to a particular delivery method. For example, Northern Kentucky University offers this for illustrative purposes:

Example 1: Face-to-Face. The following provides an example of a fictional face-to-face3-credit hour course. Faculty shall develop appropriate assignment categories and time allocations to reach the minimum course expectations		
In-Class: 3 days x 50 minutes x 15 weeks	=	37.5 hours (2250 minutes)
Readings: 15 chapters x 3 hours each	=	45.0 hours
Assignments: 8 assignments x 2 hours each	=	16.0 hours
Group Projects: 3 x 4 hours each	=	12.0 hours
Final project and oral presentation	=	25.0 hours
Total	=	135.5 hours

Similarly, an illustration is used for a fictional online course. While this approach feels rather prescriptive considering the changes currently under consideration, it is believed that such models can further reinforce the progress Southern State can make in validating the course credit-hour and aligning coursework with student learning outcomes.

Other examples, such as Loyola University Maryland's narrative description of their application of the credit hour policy, also holds promise for Southern State's next steps. Within their illustrations, Loyola provides specific descriptors that differentiate the expectations for various delivery models. For example, internships and field experiences are described as follows:

> Internships/Field Experience: Courses developed for independent learning and the development and application of job related practical skills in a particular discipline. These courses allow for observation, participation, and fieldwork, and are generally offered off campus. Internship time includes a combination of supervised time by approved experts outside the university, student assignments, and time supervised by a university instructor. The minimum number of hours varies based on the credits awarded.

It is reasonable to assume that reaching this level of specificity would prompt deeper and more meaningful reflection on course delivery, content, and alignment with student learning outcomes. This is something that Southern State is eager to consider as the College continues to make improvements in this area.

Aligning the Credit Hours and Learning Outcomes

About the Course Syllabus _____

The integrity of the credit hour is dependent on the quality and thoroughness of the course syllabi. The sample used in the Federal Compliance Review shed light on the College's inadequacy in this area. This, coupled with the College's internal review samplings, suggests that the College's compliance and commitment to quality hinge on a broader understanding course syllabus development. In particular emphasis on improved transparency between learning outcomes and their alignment to the course activities is paramount to these efforts.

Solving the Right Problem _____

The College spent considerable time grappling with the compliance finding and framing the work needed to remedy the problem. To assist the College in more clearly defining the problem, an internal review, shaped similar to that of the Federal Compliance Review, cast confirming light on the issue. Through a random sample of course syllabi from Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 representing eight different academic areas and each section representing a contrasting methodology, the College was further able to understand the original finding and subsequently shape an appropriate strategy for improvement.

Most noticeably, the review revealed significant need for transparency and clarity in the methodology as well as alignment between the course outcomes and the course assignments. Additional findings, but less prevalent, were some inconsistencies from the course syllabus and the master syllabus. Overall, the sample was reflective of too broad a spectrum of, "nearly spot-on" and including most of the critical elements, to "grossly deficient" and lacking required elements and/or basic course information. Both extremes were outliers and more frequent were examples of decent course syllabi that were lacking in a clear methodology section or the absence of course outcome alignments.

In large part, it is believed that the absence of observable alignment between the credit hour and the learning outcomes is the result of inconsistent understanding and application of syllabus construction principles at the course level. Some might argue that the College has not offered sufficient training or professional development opportunities aimed at such purposes. Further, the absence of articulated policies addressing syllabus construction has further compounded the issue. Consequently, the strategy for improving in this area rests heavily on policy and targeted professional development. And, at a broader level, the College recognizes the important role that continued development in assessment of student learning plays in the context of this issue.

Despite having an adopted syllabus template for the master syllabi evidence from the Federal Compliance Review and from internal random sampling suggests that the

underlying problem is syllabus development from the point of "master" syllabi to "course" syllabi. Too many examples suggest that the course syllabi aren't developed with enough specificity to reflect the alignment of the coursework with the delivery method not to mention the alignment with the stated course objectives (learning outcomes). In short, the lack of understanding and consistency in applying the master framework at the course level is specifically the fault-line between student learning outcomes and course methodology.

New Policy and Procedures _____

Acknowledging that current day deficiencies in course syllabi likely stem from disjointed and/or sparse professional development and procedurally weak monitoring processes, the College has made some immediate gains through new policy and continuous improvement procedures.

Course Syllabus Submission

In preparation for implementation of the policy and the continuous improvement procedures, the College introduced a course syllabus collection process. This process leverages the existing data collection procedures of the Registrar's office and is monitored by the Dean of Instructional Operations and supported by the Faculty Division Coordinators. Using a Share Point site the syllabi are submitted and maintained for review purposes. Early results suggest that the procedure needs continued oversight. The first submission request was issued and met with disappointing results with only 35% of full-time faculty and 75% of part-time faculty submitting their syllabi. However, for Spring 2017, 92% of full-time faculty have submitted their syllabi. Regrettably, the submission among part-timers slid with only 27% participating. The Dean of Instructional Operations is actively monitoring for procedural efficiencies that will improve response rates.

Course Syllabus Policy

The Vice President of Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Academic Deans, Division Coordinators, and faculty members of the College's Curriculum Committee, has introduced a new Course Syllabus Policy (Appendix B). The policy and the procedures have been presented to Curriculum Committee and are pending final approval during the March 2017 meeting.

The proposed policy speaks directly to the required items for a course syllabus and provides explanation regarding the aspects of the template that are discretionary. The College anticipates that through the adoption of such a policy, coupled with appropriate professional development, faculty will be better equipped to develop course syllabi that visibly align the delivery method with course content and student learning outcomes.

Course Syllabi Review Procedures

        To support the Syllabus Policy, review procedures (Appendix C), including an evaluation rubric have been drafted and will be approved in conjunction with the policy. Components of the review procedure include the following:

1. **Collection of Course Syllabi** (Established Fall 2016)
2. **Selection Review** – Led by the Dean of Instructional Operations, an ad-hoc committee will sample 10% of courses offered during the term. Using a rubric adapted from Columbia University's Center for Teaching Excellence, syllabi will be evaluated from the perspective of "beginning," "emerging," and "exemplary."
3. **Report for Continuous Improvement** – The ad-hoc review committee will compile findings and report to the Curriculum Committee any observable, yet not personally identifiable, trends that promote continuous improvement.
4. **Timeline for Implementation** – The early adoption of a course syllabus collection process has prepared the College for immediate implementation of the syllabus review process.

Continuous Improvement

Well-informed policy, supported by clear procedures and continuous improvement measures is essential to academic integrity. The pending implementation of the Course Syllabus Policy is grounded in systematic policy review, professional development opportunities (including onboarding processes for full-time and adjunct instructors), and a virtual repository of resources aimed at assessment of student learning and teaching excellence.

Annual Review of Policy and Procedures

The review procedures that have been outlined to support the syllabus policy inherently encourage continuous improvement and are reflected within the policy timeline. Additionally, the College will annually, during the first Curriculum Committee meeting of the Fall semester, bring forth the credit hour policy and the syllabus policy for review. While it is not anticipated that the policies will need modified this frequently, it is believed that mere inclusion on the agenda will prompt greater awareness and consequently more consistency in application.

Professional Development

To further integrate the policies that support better alignment of credit hours and student learning outcomes, the College will host syllabus construction workshops. The College annually hosts a fall and spring symposium and the first workshop is included for August 2017. In addition, the College actively uses a Blackboard training space to address training needs for adjunct instructors. A training module is scheduled for development pending the approval of the Course Syllabus Policy in March 2017. Pending approval, it is expected that this module can be uploaded to the Blackboard space within a few weeks.

Build a Virtual Teaching and Learning Toolbox

As part of the College's efforts to make greater gains in assessment of student learning, the College is actively researching best-practice ideas for building a virtual Teaching and Learning Toolbox. Modeled in part by some excellent examples including the [University of Minnesota's Center for Education Innovation](#), [Columbia University's Center for Teaching and Learning](#), [Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence](#), [Mesa Community College Center for Teaching and Learning](#) this toolbox will include examples of best-practices across a variety of areas including designing classrooms for learning, educational technologies, assessment and evaluation, among other topics.

The development of such a resource obviously reaches far beyond the scope of syllabus construction however, such a platform is the ideal virtual space to compile valuable resources that would improve the consistency of course syllabus across the curriculum and support faculty in their efforts to strengthen their assessment efforts.

Conclusions

This report, prepared in response to the Federal Compliance finding related to credit hour policy alignment with student learning outcomes, was used as a platform for critical review of policies and practices as they relate to the credit hour and syllabus construction. Considering the specificity of the team's finding, citing only "non-traditional courses in alternative formats," the College went well beyond in its response and opted for more rigorous self-examination. In the course of this endeavor, it became clear that there was opportunity for improvement across all courses and all delivery formats. As such, new policy has been developed, accompanying procedures are clearly articulated, strategies for continuous improvement are underway, and most significantly, the College community has renewed important conversations around assessment of student learning at the course level.

Through these efforts the College has effectively structured itself for compliance in all areas of credit hour policy and its application. Additionally, due to the far-reaching scope of the College's response, it is anticipated that extended gains will be realized in the assessment of student learning at the broadest level. By design, the remediation efforts introduced in response to this specific compliance finding have accelerated the assessment conversation and created renewed emphasis on the alignment of course activity with student learning outcomes at the course design level.

While the heavy lifting of policy and procedures is nearing completion and ready for implementation, the College recognizes that the continuous improvement strategies integrated in these systems is essential for long-term success. While the evidence of compliance may be easily observable through syllabus review, the College must remain focused on the larger picture of student learning outcomes as the true measure of success. This is indeed more complex and sometimes difficult to unveil; however, this work has undoubtedly created a pathway for continued progress and aligned the curriculum at the most basic level for meaningful assessment practice.

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Appendix A | Credit Hour Policy Comparison

Entity	Source	Current Credit Hour Definition/Policy
ODHE	https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/Academic-Program-Review-Guidelines_FINAL_042915.pdf	Credit Hour: a minimum of 750 minutes (semester credit hour) or 500 minutes (quarter credit hour) of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of- class assignments an average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction. Credit hours may be calculated differently for other types of instruction (e.g., laboratory experience, directed practice experience, practicum experience, cooperative work experience, field experience, observation experience, seminar, and studio experience) as long as the credit hour calculations align with commonly accepted practices in higher education and with the regulations of regional accreditors and the federal financial aid program.
Federal	https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1516FSAHbkVol3Ch1.pdf	A credit hour is formally defined, for Title IV aid purposes, as an amount of work that reasonably approximates not less than: 1. one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for a semester or trimester hour, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit (or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time); or 2. at least an equivalent amount of work as required in #1 for other academic activities such as laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, or other academic work leading to the award of credit-hours.
Columbus State CC	http://www.cscc.edu/admissions/international-student/key-terms.shtml	The unit of measurement for college work that applies to a degree or certificate. Each course has a specific number of credit hours assigned to it. Tuition and fees are based on number of credit hours registered.
Bluffton University	http://www.bluffton.edu/catalog/academics/academic/	Bluffton University defines a credit hour as a unit of measure that gives value to the level of instruction, academic rigor, time requirements and fulfillment of learning objectives for a course taken at the university. Basically, it is a proxy measure of student learning as defined by the fulfillment of learning objectives reasonably judged to require at least 12.5 clock hours per credit hour or 37.5 clock hours for a 3 credit hour course. Bluffton offers courses with a variety of learning formats and delivery modes. The following guidelines help define the average minimal time commitment required for one credit hour: 1. Not less than 50 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of 100 minutes out of class student work each week for 15 instructional weeks (including exam week) for one semester hour of credit are expected for a course taught in a traditional format. 2. At least an equivalent amount of time as required in # 1 above is required for other academic activities including laboratory work, internships, practica, cross-cultural experiences, independent studies, studio work, directed studies and other academic work leading to the awarding of credit hours. 3. At least an equivalent amount of time as required in # 1 above is required for courses taught in an online or accelerated format.
Clark State CC	https://www.clarkstate.edu/media/2162/catalog-16-17.pdf	All academic credits are expressed in terms of credit hours. Clark State defines a credit hour based on the requirements of The Ohio Department of Higher Education.
Defiance College	http://www.defiance.edu/registrar/documents/dc-undergrad-catalog-15-16b.pdf	A credit hour is a unit of measure that gives value to the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements for a course taken at Defiance College. At its most basic, a credit hour is a proxy measure of a quantity of student learning. At Defiance College, students are awarded credit for classes on the basis of the Carnegie unit. This defines a semester unit of credit as equivalent to a minimum of three hours of instruction per week for a 15-week semester for a three-hour course. This calculation is applied relatively to courses with a fewer and greater number of credit hours. In certain circumstances, it is possible to have more hours, but not less. This standard provides a standard for measuring faculty workloads, costs of instruction, and rates of educational efficiencies as well as a measure of student work for transfer students.
Edison State CC	http://catalog.edisonohio.edu/content.php?catoid=21&navoid=1571&hl=	Each course (except those of a continuing education nature) is assigned a number of credits representing the amount of time spent in classroom and laboratory each week. Since the College currently operates under a calendar divided into semesters, these

	credit+hour&returnto=search#Acade mic_Credit	credits are known as semester hour credits. In general, one credit represents one hour of classroom instruction or two hours of laboratory or clinical instruction.
Franklin University	http://www.franklin.edu/www.frankl in.edu/Registrar/Files/2016-2017_Academic_Bulletin.pdf	Each credit hour equates to 30 hours of student instructional activities. Student instructional activities (SIA) are defined as classroom time, assigned readings, and the approximate estimated time for assignment preparation by students. The length of course (in weeks) does not impact the number of hours of SIA.
Wright State	http://policy.wright.edu/policy/4001 -standard-creditinstructional-hour-base	1. **Standard Credit Hour Base:** Under the semester academic calendar, the standard course credit hour will be based on three semester credit hours. While the majority of course offerings will be three credit hours, all course offerings will not be constrained to three credit hours. Justifications can be made for fewer or more credit hours per course so as to accommodate different academic program needs, curricular innovations, and instructional methods. 2. **Standard Instructional Hour Base:** Under the semester academic calendar, the standard class time instructional base will be 750 minutes per credit hour per semester: 1 Credit Hour Class=750 Scheduled Class Meeting Minutes per Semester. Laboratories are twice that amount: 1 Credit Hour Laboratory=1500 Scheduled Laboratory Meeting Minutes per Semester. Over the span of a semester, the total class meeting minutes vary according to courses' total credit hours and how it is scheduled.
University of Cincinnati	https://www.uc.edu/registrar/policie s_and_procedures/credit_hour_defi nition.html	**Ohio Board of Regents (February 2010) Semester Credit Hour Definition:** 1. One (1) semester credit hour will be awarded for a minimum of seven hundred fifty (750) minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction (1,500 minutes). It is acknowledged that formalized instruction may take place in a variety of modes. 2. While awarding semester credit hours typically occurs for instruction delivered in accordance with an institution's standard semester calendar, it may also occur for an instruction that may not follow the typical pattern of an institution's semester calendar as long as the criteria for awarding such credit is met.

Ohio State	http://trustees.osu.edu/rules/univer sity-rules/chapter-3335-8-instruction.html	A. All courses shall be assigned a number of credit hours in accordance with the procedure outlined in rules 3335-8-02 to 3335-8-04 of the Administrative Code. This may be any number from zero on up; however, in determining the credit hours assigned, the department, school, college and council on academic affairs should use as a guide the following suggested standards:
		
		    1. One credit hour shall be assigned for each three hours per week of the average student's time, including class hours, required to earn the average grade of "C" in this course.
		
		    2. One credit hour shall be assigned for each two consecutive hours of practical or experimental work per week in any department or school.
		
		    3. One credit hour shall be assigned for each three hours of laboratory work per week, when no additional outside work is required. When outside work is required, then the standard in paragraph (A)(1) of this rule shall be applied.
		
		B. In determining the hours per week required by the course or work, the council on academic affairs may, in appropriate cases, consider the average weekly hours spent during a semester, summer term, or session on the course or work. It should be remembered that the above are guides only and may be deviated from for good cause.

		C. When comparing or combining semester credit hours with quarter credit hours, one semester credit hour shall be the equivalent of one and one-half quarter credit hours.
Wilmington College	http://www.wilmington.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-2017-WC-Catalog-61616.pdf	1. Regular: For each credit granted, the student attends 45 minutes of lecture/ discussion per week and spends approximately two hours preparing for that class. Laboratory/Studio classes receive one credit for two or three hours of instruction per week, depending on the discipline involved, and each student will spend about one-half hour in preparation for each laboratory/studio hour. 2. Independent study: The student and professor should meet once every week or every other week for a total of 15 hours per semester to assess the progress of the study.

Appendix B | Policy on Course Syllabi

SOUTHERN STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Policy on Course Syllabi

Policy Information	
Responsible Unit	Academic Affairs
Reviewing Body	Curriculum Committee
Review Cycle	Annual / November Meeting
Effective Date	March 2017
Last Revised Date	
Type of Policy	Academic Operations

Policy Overview

The distribution of course information (course syllabus) is required for all Southern State Community College courses and should be delivered to students during the first week of class. The course syllabus is the summary of topics, course structure, course policies, and other specific information that a faculty member will deliver and/or require in a particular course. The College's Curriculum Committee is charged with approving the master syllabus for courses offered by Southern State Community College. It is expected that all teaching faculty will use the master, approved syllabi only as a starting point for syllabi construction and exercise their academic freedom in shaping how the course objectives (also referred to as learning outcomes) will be mastered by the student. This policy relates to information that must appear in common on all course syllabi, discretionary information, as well as the processes required for continuous improvement.

A. Syllabus Construction:

The master syllabi or "approved curriculum" is available on the College's website at https://www.sscc.edu/facultystaff/index.shtml. The master syllabus is the Curriculum Committee's approved course and includes pre-defined and required components as well as discretionary sections. It is the framework from which teaching faculty can use in the development of a syllabus for their individual course section. The underlying principle guiding course syllabus construction is that students have an increased likelihood for success when they know what is expected of them in the greatest detail possible. Additionally, the consistency in the use and application of pre-defined components strengthens academic integrity across the institution.

Required Items	Explanation	Example (For illustration purposes ONLY!)		
1. Course Title*	Use the exact title as indicated on the master syllabus.	Principles of Accounting II		
2. Catalog Prefix/Course Number/Course Section*	The catalog prefix and the course number are included in master syllabus. The course section is unique to the campus and delivery methodology of each course during a given term.	Prefix	Number	Section
		ACCT	1102	C01
3. Prerequisites*	Identified on the master syllabus. This is the course(s) required prior to taking the course in question.	ACCT1101 – Principles of Managerial Accounting		
4. Course time/location	It is good practice to include the time and location for the course.	M/W | 3-4:50 p.m. Room 106 | Central Campus		
5. Credit Hours*	The credit hours for a particular course is identified on the master syllabus and derived from the application of the College's credit hour policy available online at (insert link). Generally speaking, an hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction is complemented by two hours outside of class each week for approximately 15 weeks, or an arrangement that yields the same ratio. (Based on a 4 credit hour example)	4 credit hours		
6. Faculty Contact Information	This should include as much contact information as the faculty member teaching the particular section is comfortable communicating. It should include enough to be reasonably accessible through at least two communication mediums including office hours/location.	Dr. John Doe jdoe@sscc.edu 1.800.628.7722 x. 1234 Office Hours: North Campus – Room 111 Mon./Wed. – 9:15 a.m. -11:30 a.m.		
7. Course Description*	Identified in the master syllabus.	An introduction to the use of accounting data in managerial decision making with an emphasis on the capital structure of corporations, financial statement analysis and managerial accounting techniques. Content includes...		
8. Course Objectives*	Identified in the master syllabus. "Objectives" are often used synonymously with "learning outcomes."	At the completion of this course, the student will exhibit the following knowledge and competency skills: 1. Be able to...		

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Required Items	Explanation	Example (For illustration purposes ONLY!)			
9. Adopted Text*	Identified in the master syllabus.	Fundamental Accounting Principles with Connect Plus 21ᵉ Edition John Wild, Ken Shaw, and Barbara Chiapetta ISBN: 0077785924			
10. Other Required Books, Software, and Materials**	It is common to include items beyond the adopted text however, if the item is not widely and freely available, it must be approved through the curriculum committee prior to inclusion in the course.	*Example Not Requiring Curriculum Committee Approval:* Students will be required to use the Wall Street Journal as a course reference. *Example Requiring Curriculum Committee Approval:* Students will be required to have a student subscription to the Wall Street Journal.			

Required Items	Explanation	Total Points	Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
10. Grading Scale***	Grading will follow the policy in the catalog.	900-1000	A	90-100%	4.0

Required Items	Explanation	Category	Total Points	% of Grade
11. Grading Procedures or Evaluation	This section is suggested to include a detailed description of how grades can be earned as well as the value of each assignment or assessment. Additionally, this is a good place to include participation/attendance if it is factored into a student's grade.	Chapter Assignments (10x30)	300	30%
		Quizzes (10x20)	200	20%
		Unit Exams (3x100)	300	30%
		Assignments (5x10)	50	5%
		Annual Report Project (100)	100	10%
		Attendance	50	5%
		Total	1000	100%

Required Items	Explanation	Example (For illustration purposes ONLY!)
12. Course Methodology or Course Format	This section must be included in all course syllabi, however; methodology may be more commonly understood by students as "course format." Essentially, this is the manner in which the course will be delivered. Depending on the section being taught, it is expected to include narrative in this section that speaks directly to the various delivery methods that may be used in order to help students meet the course objective (learning outcomes) within the credit hour parameter assigned to the course. The methodology section included on the approved master syllabus should be heavily considered prior to any alterations. Note: The course methodology must be consistent with the format identified on the master schedule and cannot be altered. For example, a traditional face-to-face course cannot include a methodology that suggests the course is delivered solely online.	Students in this course will meet the learning objective using a variety of techniques including; lectures, class discussions, small group projects, supplemental assignments, and out of class work. They will be evaluated for mastery of content through chapter assignments, quizzes, exams and a final project.
13. Course Outline	This is among one of the most important components of a course syllabus and also an area that is highly discretionary. Students often spend more time in this section of a syllabus than any other. This section should provide the topic outline and schedule that is expected to guide the entire term. A well-constructed course outline is essential in helping students bridge their assignments with the course objectives (learning outcomes). A "sample" outline is included in every approved syllabus, however; the sample is the framework in its most basic form. Teaching faculty are expected to expand on the provided outline and as much detail as possible in assisting students stay on schedule with assignments, readings, projects. It would not be uncommon to include a summative table within the body of the course syllabus and use an "attachment" to expand in more detail.	Sample course outlines are available on the College's Teaching and Learning Excellence webpage.

Required Items	Explanation	Example (For illustration purposes ONLY!)
14. Specific Management Requirements***	Identified in the master syllabus.	
15. Other Information***	**FERPA:** Students need to understand that their work may be seen by others. Others may see their work when being distributed, during group project work, or if it is chosen for demonstration purposes. Students also need to know that there is a strong possibility that their work may be submitted to other entities for the purpose of plagiarism checks. **DISABILITIES:** Students with disabilities may contact the Disabilities Service Office, Central Campus, at 800-628-7722 or 937-393-3431. In addition to the FERPA and Disabilities notation, this is an ideal location for additional classroom policies such as the use of cell phones, late arrivals, attendance, etc. Additionally, faculty may want to consider using this space for reference to academic honesty, the right to change aspects of the syllabus, procedures specific to assignments, classroom preferences, etc.	A repository for sample language is available on the College's Teaching and Learning Excellence resource page.

* Item cannot be altered from that which is included in the master syllabus approved by the Curriculum Committee.

** Any alteration or addition must be approved by the Curriculum Committee.

***Item should begin with language as approved in the master syllabus but may be added to at the discretion of the faculty member.

B. Continuous Improvement

The Syllabi Policy is only as strong as the process for maintaining and monitoring its application. To this end, the College has developed systems for collecting course syllabi for each term and has also established a review process including a best practices rubric and a system for random sampling and constructive feedback.

1. Collection of Course Syllabi

Using the deadline established for class lists, faculty must submit an electronic copy, preferably a MS Word document, of their course syllabus used during that particular term, to the faculty assistant on their respective campus. These syllabi will be stored on a SharePoint site for a period of five years.

2. Random Sampling Review

Each term a random sample of no less than 10% of all sections offered will be selected for continuous improvement review. The syllabi selected will be reviewed by a Curriculum Committee subgroup with representation from faculty, students, and administration. Using the Syllabus Evaluation Rubric (Appendix A), approved by the Curriculum Committee, the sample will be reviewed and a summary provided back to the faculty member. A collective report of the sample including the following elements will be shared with the Curriculum Committee:
   a. Overall percentage of syllabi submitted as required in B.1.
   b. Number of syllabi reviewed
   c. Academic areas of representation
   d. Percentage of syllabi evaluated as "Beginning," "Emerging," and "Exemplary"
   e. Any observable, yet not individually identifiable, trends that promote continuous improvement

Note: During the Spring 2017, Summer 2017, and Fall 2017 terms, additional syllabi will be selected based on delivery methodology as to take a more aggressive approach to the HLC findings from the 2015 comprehensive site visit. The intent for using methodology variety specifically is to take immediate corrective actions in areas we know are problematic.

Appendix C | Procedure for Course Syllabus Review

SOUTHERN STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Procedure for Course Syllabus Review

Procedure Information	
Related Policy	Policy on Course Syllabi
Responsible Unit	Academic Affairs
Reviewing Body	Curriculum Committee
Review Cycle	Annual / November Meeting
Effective Date	March 2017
Last Revised Date	
Type of Procedure	Continuous Improvement

Procedure Overview

In support of the policy for course syllabi, the College has adopted specific review procedures including the use of an approved rubric. This is intended to inform the review process and clearly define the criteria upon which the continuous improvement efforts are based. As the Curriculum Committee makes adjustments to the course syllabi policy so too will adjustments be necessary for this procedure.

The Review Procedure

1. Collection of Course Syllabi
   a. Using the deadline established for class lists faculty must submit an electronic copy (preferably MS Word) of their course syllabus used during that particular term.
   b. Syllabus should be emailed to a faculty assistant.
   c. Syllabi are maintained on a SharePoint site in a folder organized by division.
   d. Division Coordinator should assist in the collection process through reminders
   e. Syllabi will be organized by academic term and stored for five years.

2. Semi-Random Sample Review
    a. The Dean of Instructional Operations, in collaboration with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, is responsible for implementing this process.
    b. Each term a sample representing 10% of all courses offered will be selected for review. The sample should include a variety of delivery methodologies from diverse academic divisions.
    c. The Vice President of Academic Affairs will select an ad-hoc committee including select members of the curriculum committee, a student representative, and other staff/administration at his/her discretion to conduct the review.
    d. Using the approved rubric, the reporting out of this process back to the Curriculum Committee will includes the following elements:
        1) Overall percentage of syllabi submitted
        2) Number of syllabi reviewed
        3) Academic areas of representation
        4) Percentage of syllabi evaluated as "Beginning," "Emerging," and "Exemplary"
        5) Any observable, yet not individually identifiable, trends that promote continuous improvement
    e. The subgroup is expected to take care to use the review and any report out as a non-punitive improvement measure.

3. General Timeline

Timeframe	Course Syllabi Submission	Ad-hoc Committee Review	Report to Curriculum Committee	Misc. Continuous Improvement Practices
January	Spring Term			
February		Spring Term		
March			Spring Term	
April				
May				
June	Summer Term			
July		Summer Term		
August				
September	Fall Term			
October		Fall Term		
November			Summer/Fall Term	
December				

About the Rubric

The Course Syllabus Rubric is inspired by best practice from Cornell University's Center for Teaching Excellence. The concept of "beginning," "emerging," and "exemplary" are affirming stages intended to advance the work of faculty in the area of syllabus construction. The feedback provided to faculty will be presented alongside the rubric with additional space for narrative about the assessment and potential steps for improvement.

The rubric is organized by criterion that may or may not align with the section header included in the syllabus template. Rather, the elements of the rubric speak to both specific and general attributes of a course syllabus.

Resources:

Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence. Syllabus Rubric. Available online at
https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Syllabus%20Rubric.pdf Retrieved February 2017.

See Rubric on Following Page…

Academic Policies/Guidelines/Procedures | Syllabi Review Procedures | Adopted March 2017 | Last Updated: N/A

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Southern State Community College Course Syllabus Rubric

Criterion	Beginning	Emerging	Exemplary
Basic Course Detail	Course title, credit hours, class time, and faculty name	All elements in previous stage and detailed contact information, overview of the course content, adopted text, clear instructions about other material	Complete course information and contact information including multiple contact methods. Description of the course. Well organized, visible to readers, includes feedback mechanisms
Course Outcomes	Not included	Included but stated in general and vague terms	Listed with descriptive verbs or skills that lend themselves to measurement
Course Format	Vague, or cryptic descriptions of course expectations or how class time will be used	Mutual role expectations for student and instructor are explained, together with various teaching methods and modes	Role expectation and class format are explained in such a way that students understand the underlying rationale and benefits for them.
Assessment of Student Learning	A grade scale is included	The grade scale is understandable, consistent with the College's grading scale and includes some elements of how grades are computed	Includes a comprehensive description of how students can earn grades in the course and how the course content/assignments are weighted and aligned with the course objectives (outcomes).
Class Schedule	Includes a weekly calendar that aligns with chapters of a textbook	Includes a weekly calendar that aligns content with the course learning objectives (outcomes)	Fully articulated and logically sequenced course with topics listed for each class session, along with required readings, and preparation necessary of students.
Alignment of Assignments with Course Objectives (Outcomes)	Vague listing of assignments due	Assignments are clearly identified with a due date	Assignments are identified with due dates and linked to a specific course objective (outcome). Additionally, students have a clear explanation of how their assignment will be evaluated
Academic Policies and Procedures	The required FERPA and Disabilities Services statements are included	In addition to required policies, the syllabus includes additional policies that articulate attendance expectations and late assignments	Information pertinent to required policies is present as well as other relevant policies. Classroom conduct, tips for success in the course, and other expectations are clearly articulated.
Overall construction	A copy of the master syllabus was submitted	The master syllabus was used as the general framework and additions and adjustments were made to address course methodology and course objectives.	The syllabus was well constructed using all of the required elements and care was taken to shape assignments, schedules, policies, etc. in a manner that is clear to students. The presentation was logical and distinctly tied to course objectives (outcomes)

Appendix D | Timeline for Continuous Improvement

5/1/2017 - 8/1/2017
Continuous Improvement

Research Best Practice Resources
Populate Virtual Teaching and Learning
Toolbox

Today

2/1/2017 - 3/1/2017
Review Spring 2017 Syllabi

Faculty Submit Summer
2017 Syllabi

Faculty Submit
Fall 2017 Syllabi

Summer 2017 & Fall 2017
Continuous Improvement Report
to Curriculum Committee

3/1/2017   4/1/2017   5/1/2017   6/1/2017   7/1/2017   8/1/2017   9/1/2017   10/1/2017   11/1/2017

2/1/2017

Spring 2017
Continuous
Improvement Report
to Curriculum
Committee

6/4/2017 - 7/4/2017
Review Summer 2017 Syllabi

9/1/2017 - 10/1/2017
Review Fall 2017 Syllabi

12/1/2017