I. PURPOSE & INTENT

A University of South Florida System (USF System) Policy is required to address the Regulations and procedures mandated in the following: 1) Florida Board of Governors' (BOG) Regulation 8.016, Academic Learning Compacts; 2) the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation Federal Requirements 4.8 (Definition of a Credit Hour); and 3) various SACSCOC Policy Statements, including but not limited to those relating to Credit Hours, Direct Assessment Competency Based Educational Programs, Distance and Correspondence Education, and The Quality and Integrity of Educational Credentials, the SACSCOC policy regarding Electronic Delivery of Courses.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Student learning outcomes at the University of South Florida are designed for the formative evaluation of programs. They are also a means of gauging the quality of education independent of traditional seat time. Every academic and administrative student support program at each USF System institution must have an active assessment plan on file in the institutional assessment management system. All undergraduate academic programs must meet the requirements of BOG Regulation 8.016, Academic Learning Compacts. This Regulation requires the ongoing assessment of critical thinking skills, communication skills, and content/discipline knowledge and skills. Institutions may have Academic Learning Compacts (ALC) requirements beyond these three content areas.

Furthermore, in cases where academic programs are delivered in non-traditional modes (off-campus sites, online programs, distance/correspondence, etc.) student learning outcomes are to be used as the basis for awarding credit hours to courses. USF System has a specific Policy on Credit Hours which can be accessed at http://generalcounsel.usf.edu/policies-and-procedures/pdfs/policy-10-065.pdf.
Credit hours must meet the criteria of the Federal definition of a credit hour. In all cases, but particularly in cases where seat time is non-verifiable, credit hours should be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount and type of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified period of academically engaged time and on the basis of documented student learning outcomes that reflect the amount of academically engaged time for a typical student in a traditional class format. The number and/or rigor of student learning outcomes should be differentiated on the basis of the number of credit hours awarded with the higher number of credit hours awarded yielding greater number and/or rigor of outcomes.

**III. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

A. *Academically Engaged Time*: The period during which a student is actively engaged in a targeted learning experience, e.g., course content as part of a credit-bearing course.

B. *Student Learning Outcome*: The specific knowledge, skills, and abilities a student has attained as a result of engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences.

C. *Formative Evaluation*: A process through which students or other target populations are evaluated for the purposes of program improvement.

D. *Federal Definition of a Student Credit Hour*: A 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 the following: (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction\(^1\) and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, 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 item (1) above for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, cooperative education, practica, studio work, independent research, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

*Current Responsible Office: Academic Affairs*

*Refer to the appropriate Responsible Office website for a current name of the Vice President or other Responsible Officer.*

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\(^1\) Direct Faculty Instruction: Instruction in a traditional classroom setting in which the faculty member is physically present with students enrolled in the course for which the credit is being awarded.