



**Higher Learning Commission**  
A commission of the North Central Association

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June 10, 2014

Dr. Steven Ender  
President  
Grand Rapids Community College  
143 Bostwick Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Dear President Ender:

Attached is the report of the team that conducted Grand Rapids Community College's Quality Checkup site visit. In addition to communicating the team's evaluation of your institution's compliance with the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and the Commission's Federal Compliance Program, the report captures the team's assessment of your institution's use of the feedback from its last Systems Appraisal and its overall commitment to continuous improvement.

A copy of the report will be read and analyzed by the AQIP Panel that reviews institutions for Reaffirmation of Accreditation at the time your institution's review is scheduled.

Please acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and provide any comments you wish to make about it. Your response will become a part of the institution's permanent record.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Green  
AQIP Accreditation Services

# QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

# Grand Rapids Community College

Grand Rapids, MI  
April 2-4, 2014

**The Higher Learning Commission**  
A Commission of the North Central Association

## QUALITY CHECKUP TEAM MEMBERS:

**Christine Manion**

Director of Strategic Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Accreditation  
Milwaukee Area Technical College

**Craig Mosher**

Vice President for Institutional Advancement  
Highland Community College

## **Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program**

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification), including review of distance delivery and distributed education if the institution is so engaged.
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewers trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*. The Quality Summary Report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluators. Copies of the Quality Checkup Report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. The Commission retains a copy in the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

**Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio***

In the Visit Team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. This evidence exemplifies the value of the Quality Checkup Visit – what an institution presents in writing may raise questions that are quickly answered when Visit Team members have the chance to sit down with institutional personnel and see evidence that assures the Visit members the institution is operating in a manner that is acceptable and complies with the Commission's standards and AQIP's expectations. That is certainly the case with GRCC. The College utilizes the Baldrige Option for its Systems Portfolio and was one of the first institutions to take advantage of that option, so it has a history of working with Continuous Improvement concepts. That history is reflected in their Baldrige materials and subsequent AQIP analysis. Having no Strategic Issues and few recommendations from the Portfolio Appraisal Team, the Visit Team was able to focus on verifying that the College is indeed operating in a manner that meets or exceeds AQIP's expectations. The visit was highly organized and efficiently conducted in a manner that allowed the Visit Team to get a clear view of what was described in the Portfolio and subsequent materials. Clarifications of Portfolio contents focused on the effectiveness of the College's governance system, which is discussed later in this report.

Due to the cleanliness of the Baldrige materials and few issues to clarify, the Visit Team was able to use the majority of the visit on verification of the Portfolio contents. Those contents were verified by a series of visits with GRCC personnel who expertly communicated the high level of personal and professional involvement inherent in the College's culture. GRCC has a strong team approach to dealing with its services to its publics, and those teams are comprised of individuals who understand the structure within which they are working and their role in that structure. The Visit Team was so impressed with the high level of involvement and achievement that we raised the question of personnel burnout. The College is preparing to celebrate its Centennial year of providing educational services to the people in the Grand Rapids area, and, just as they are with standing teams, the GRCC people are heavily invested in event planning to share their pride in being part of the College. Consequently, while there is acknowledgement of the need to take a look at the intensity of personnel involvement, the excitement associated with the upcoming Centennial celebration appears to outweigh personnel burnout in the near future. The GRCC Systems Portfolio makes it appear that the institution has strong leadership, an actively involved Board that understands its role, an effective governance structure that is organized to address issues as they occur, and personnel that are delivering quality academic and personal development coursework to meet the needs of its publics. The Checkup Visit was able to verify that that is indeed the case.

**Review of the organization's quality assurance oversight of its distance education activities.**

*In the Visit Team's judgment, the institution has presented satisfactory evidence that its distance education activities are acceptable and do comply with the Commission's standards and expectations.*

Hybrid and online coursework accounts for about 12 percent (about half of the goal established by a previous Action Project) of the credit hours generated at GRCC. Previous AQIP Action Projects have addressed preparation of faculty involved in delivering coursework and also the support services needed by those faculty to ensure a quality student experience and one that equates with the campus student experience. Oversight for the development, offering, support, and evaluation of distance education activities rests with a cross-functional team led by an associate provost and dean that includes a high level of faculty involvement. The hybrid and online coursework is offered using the same policies and guidelines as those used for campus coursework; full and adjunct faculty who teach these courses receive training and support in the technology the College utilizes for the delivery of that coursework; IT, academic, and student support services are available; and student identity is verified through visualization of individual students by the instructor using distance technology. It was apparent that there is a high level of ownership by members of the oversight team who are highly invested in the success of distance education programming.

**Review of the organization's quality assurance and oversight of distributed education (multiple campuses)**

**The Visit Team confirmed that Grand Rapids Community College does not offer programs at additional campuses at this time, and that the College understands it must seek HLC approval before it offers 50% or more of any program at an additional location. The College does have an additional site beyond its Grand Rapids campus, located in Holland, MI, which has the appropriate administrative and support personnel to offer coursework that amounts to less than half an academic program.**

**Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal**

**Grand Rapids Community College had no accreditation issues noted in its last Systems Appraisal. The Visit Team was able to confirm that GRCC's evidence that it meets all accreditation requirements is complete and in order.**

**Screening of Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components**

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Quality Checkup Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission’s *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the core components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and core components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Quality Checkup affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Items judged to be “Adequate but could be improved” or “Unclear or incomplete” during the Checkup Visit screening will not require Commission follow-up in the form of written reports or focused visits. However, Commission follow-up will occur if the issues remain apparent at the point of reaffirmation of accreditation.

Criterion 1: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	1A	1B	1C	1D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x		
Adequate but could be improved.				x	
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 2: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x		x
Adequate but could be improved.				x	
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 3: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x				
Adequate but could be improved.		x	x	x	x
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x				
Adequate but could be improved.		x	x		
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 5: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x		x		
Adequate but could be improved.		x		x	
Unclear or incomplete.					

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to addressing the Criteria, documenting how they are meeting those Criteria, and the subsequent performance of their processes as they address the Criteria were acceptable

and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations. One example is the College's approach to the issue of developmental programming (Core Component 3B, 4B), an issue that is common across the nation. GRCC has taken the proactive step of developing methods to identify and remove barriers to accelerate student learning in developmental programming. Another proactive step is identifying cohorts of current students so they can be tracked and programming can be targeted to assist the specific cohort from Street to Completion. The cohorts are students who continue to remain active students, those who transfer, those who stop out, and those who are lost. By identifying students where they are in the degree/certificate completion process – from the beginning (the Street)—through course and program academic work (active, transfer) – to regaining those who stop out or are lost – to successful Completion of the degree or certificate, the College is better able to focus its completion activities to meet the needs of the students where they are. These are just examples of how the College is proactively addressing student needs and also the Core Components of the Criteria. These proactive examples and other related to the chart above are still too new for measureable results, so the College is encouraged to continue these improvements so it had data to document the results.

The College is in the process of implementing two significant processes that will have an equally significant impact on its ability to actively reflect Core Component 2D – the institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The GRCC Trustees will approve a new Academic Freedom policy this spring and faculty are currently heavily involved with documenting their teaching and learning capabilities in a new evaluation system. Both have passed through the College's vetting processes; both are currently significant for different reasons and there is a learning opportunity here. Academic Freedom can be a highly volatile issue; the creation of a new policy was vigorously pursued and accomplished as the result of the AQIP process, and it proved to not only not be volatile, it was a bonding opportunity as all aspects of the institution came together and are pleased with the resulting policy. The caveat expressed in Systems Appraisal remains – coupling freedom of expression with community standards. The new evaluation process does not have the same level of support as the new Academic Freedom policy, even though, at least to an outside view, it passed through the appropriate vetting process. It has not been as well received by those it will most affect – the faculty – due to the amount of documentation that is perceived to be onerous. A question then arises – does the vetting process used determine the success of the policy? Ancillary questions are is there a point in a process, regardless of how well constructed and vetted, that it is apparent that the process is just too much and if the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning can fall victim to what is perceived as an onerous evaluation process.

As part of its strong team structure, the College is addressing the opportunities identified in Core

Components 3B, C, and D, and the Visit Team is confident those opportunities will be met. Comparative data is a CI tool that provides an external measuring stick. As it has addressed the opportunity noted in Core Component 3E, the College has determined that existing external databases do not provide that stick for student activities, so it will use its own data as the baseline and compare the results for subsequent years. External comparisons are of such value that the Visiting Team encourages the College to continue to seek like institutions with which to compare.

GRCC has been using the Baldrige Option for its Systems Portfolio and is aware that the Baldrige Option will no longer be available. The College is to be commended for being one of the pioneers in the use of the Baldrige format in an educational setting; that history has prepared them well in the use of Continuous Improvement concepts, principles, and tools.

**Review of the institution’s approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the Strategic Issues Analysis.**

*It is the Visit Team’s judgment that GRCC presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup.* The institution’s approach to the recommendations identified by the Systems Appraisal Team – which was to specifically address each recommendation in the Quality Program Summary -- was acceptable and complies with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

For example, since GRCC used the Baldrige Option for its Systems Appraisal, the resulting Feedback Report focused on how the College was addressing the Core Components of the Criteria. Consequently, to address the recommendations identified by the Systems Appraisal Team within each Core Component, the College addressed the issues raised in those Components. The resulting document, complete with supporting material, reveals a clear disclosure of all institutional activities that address the issues raised by the Appraisal Team in each Core Component.

The issues raised by the Appraisal Team do not approach the level of being Strategic Issues. They are simply issues the College would want to consider. In addition to issues raised, the primary topic raised from the reading for the Visit Team was a clarification of GRCC’s governance structure – from the writing, it appeared to be a complex system of policies that sounded good and could be cited as addressing the Criteria, but appeared to be difficult to implement. Once on site, the Team was able to understand how GRCC is using the policy governance model, and that the Board of Trustees is enthusiastic about the model, the president is a proponent, that terms like “Executive Limitations” for the president are actually common sense understandings between the Board and the president that clearly delineate what the Board expects of the president. From every indication shown during the Visit, the

policy governance structure is working well. What could be construed as an example of an institution being overwhelmed with policies is actually a well-organized institution with policies firmly in place that clarify individual roles within the functioning units.

A point made in the Feedback Report further supports the inherency of the policy governance structure at GRCC. From the reading of the material in Core Component 2D, the Systems Appraisal Team encouraged the College to review the content of its academic freedom policy to ensure that its wording was an accurate reflection of institutional intent. The College Board and administration took that suggestion to heart and, using the policy governance structures firmly embedded in its culture, involved all components of the College to review the existing policy and emerged with a new academic freedom policy that has been fully vetted from the College community and will be subject to Board approval shortly in the spring of 2014.

Adherence to the policy governance model also explained how the College is able to address possible gaps in communication that could occur in the dissemination of information concerning the Ethics Monitoring System, a system that could well serve as a Best Practice for other institutions seeking an effective method of reporting, collecting, and acting on ethics violations and student complaints.

### **Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement**

Based on the materials reviewed and the discussions held, the Visit Team is satisfied that GRCC presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup in an exemplary fashion.

As noted previously, the College has a history of association with the Baldrige Criteria, and the Visit Team was most impressed with how the College is organized to allow, provide, and support a network of teams to address its core functions and any issues that arise within those functions. The Team was equally impressed with the full ownership of institutional and program learning outcomes and measurements as demonstrated by the academic program reviews. It is clear that the College utilizes CI concepts, tools, and principles in its daily approach to providing a quality educational experience for the publics it serves. Two major factors which contribute to the effective operation of an organization are the structures adopted and the quality of people involved in those structures. Grand Rapids can look with pride at how well its teams operate and the achievements those teams are generating. The College is fully committed to its continual improvement and its people are making that happen in exemplary fashion.

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**Other AQIP Considerations or Concerns**

The following are merely observations that do not rise to the level of an AQIP consideration and certainly not a concern. These observations are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement for consideration by College officials.

1. As noted in GRCC's materials, the College is justifiably proud of its Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV) as the drivers for its strategic planning and operations, but the Team found the MVV posted in only one fairly inconspicuous area. Perhaps it is celebrated more fully elsewhere on campus and we just missed it. At any rate, the upcoming Centennial celebration will provide the College ample opportunity to share its MVV in a variety of visual methods.
2. A second observation relates to the intensity of the work being done by the various College teams (noted in comments related to work done since the Systems Appraisal in the first section above). In addition to possible employee burnout, the work itself can sometimes become the focus rather than what the work is seeking to achieve. Consequently, it may help to put a face on the work being done. For example, in the student cohort segmentation that is being done by one team, put a face on the retained students – who are they? Put a face on the lost students – who are they?
3. Perhaps related to the faces of the students affected by the teams' work is the lack of student awareness of how AQIP affects the quality of the educational experience they are receiving at GRCC. The dedication to CI principles is having such a significant effect on the GRCC student experience that the students should know that – understanding how CI is affecting them could further enhance that experience.
4. The students the Visit Team met with were all very complimentary of their educational experience. They especially felt very safe on the GRCC campus, no small feat these days, and gave special notice to the effectiveness of having not only a Criminal Justice program, but a fully functioning law enforcement academy, an attentive campus police force, and the local police in close proximity.
5. Visiting with the faculty showed that there is concern about the evaluation system the College is transitioning to; primarily the amount of paperwork involved in documenting faculty work and involvement. From additional conversations, it should be clarified for all exactly how the new system came to be. While communication was not raised as an issue between faculty and administration, the amount of frustration expressed by the faculty was directed at the administration without acknowledgement that the new system is the result of the negotiation process firmly embedded in the College culture.

## Appendix

# Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Program Length and Tuition, Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours

## Part 1: Program Length and Tuition

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### Instructions

The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).

Review the “*Worksheet for Use by Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours*” as well as the course catalog and other attachments required for the institutional worksheet.

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### Worksheet on Program Length and Tuition

#### A. Answer the Following Questions

Are the institution's degree program requirements within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

Yes       No

Comments: *The Associate Degree programs include no less than 60 semester credits, often requiring 62-64 credits, and 72 credit degrees in health programs (4 ½ semester programs), which are all within the range of good practice for higher education.*

Are the institution's tuition costs across programs within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

Yes       No

Comments: *Tuition costs are consistent across programs and in line with those found in similar institutes of higher education.*

## B. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's program length and tuition practices?

Yes

No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

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## Part 2: Assignment of Credit Hours

### Instructions

In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps:

1. Review the Worksheet completed by the institution, which provides information about an institution's academic calendar and an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats, and the institution's policy and procedures for awarding credit hours. Note that such policies may be at the institution or department level and may be differentiated by such distinctions as undergraduate or graduate, by delivery format, etc.
2. Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level. The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:
  - Associate's degrees = 60 hours
  - Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours
  - Master's or other degrees beyond the Bachelor's = at least 30 hours beyond the Bachelor's degree
  - Note that one quarter hour = .67 semester hour
  - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.
3. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution.
  - At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14-16 weeks

(or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The description in the catalog should indicate a course that is appropriately rigorous and has collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.

- Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)
  - Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode, and types of academic activities.
  - Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the above federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. Commission procedure also permits this approach.
4. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course. Pay particular attention to alternatively-structured or other courses with particularly high credit hours for a course completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor.
5. **Sampling.** Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.
- At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.
  - For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.
  - Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.
  - For the programs the team sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several of the courses in the program, identify the contact hours for each course, and expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.
  - The team should pay particular attention to alternatively-structured and other courses that have high credit hours and less frequently scheduled interaction between the students and the instructor.
  - Provide information on the samples in the appropriate space on the worksheet.

6. Consider the following questions:

- Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?
- Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?
- For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe allotted for the course?
- Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)
- If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?

7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:

- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently-detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and evidence of implementation.
- If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or single department or division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.
- If the team identifies systematic non-compliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify Commission staff immediately and work with staff to design appropriate follow-up activities. The Commission shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

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## Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours

### A. Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team (see #5 of instructions in completing this section)

**Sampled programs reviewed include: Accounting AB (62/63 credit hours); Child Development, AAAS (64 Total Credits); Associate of Arts, AA (60 credits); Electrical Controls Engineering Technology, A.A.A.S (62 minimum credits); Recording Technology, AM (68 Total Credits); Web Technical Support, AAAS (64 Total Credits)**

**Academic courses reviewed:**

Course #	Course Title	Credit Hr	Ground	Hybrid	Online
AN 205	Intro to Archaeology	3			X
AR 111	Orientation to Architecture	2			X
BA 101	Business & Technical English	3		X	
BA 150	Math Applications in Business	4			X
CA 105	Culinary Arts Skill Dev	5	X		
EC 252	Principles of Microeconomics	3	X		
EC 290	Intro to the Modern Irish Economy	3		X	
ED 200	Introduction to Education				X
EL 132	Electronics Mathematics	4	X		
EN 100	College Writing	3	X		
HS 215	The Modern World	3			X
MN 114A	Mach Trades Blueprt Rdng - A	1	X		
MUS 182	Chamber Music 2	1	X		
NUR 100	Perspectives in Nursing	2	X		
PC 101	General Physical Science	4		X	

**B. Answer the Following Questions**

**1) Institutional Policies on Credit Hours**

Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?

Yes       No

Comments: ***The GRCC policy on credit hours is institution-wide. There is a formal process through the Academic Governing Council to change credit hours or fees for any program.***

Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution?

Yes       No

Comments: ***The policy includes the amount of instructional or contact time and homework expected per credit hour, including clinicals, labs, studios, music ensembles, practica, internships, fieldwork, co-ops, and lectures.***

For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

Yes                       No

Comments: *GRCC offers 25 certificate programs, and most of these certificate credits can then be applied toward specific Associate Degrees. These certificates require 30 – 34 credit hours. For dental assisting courses, the accrediting body (The Commission on Dental Accreditation through the American Dental Association) states the dental assisting curriculum must be structured on the basis of a minimum of 900 instructional hours at the postsecondary level that includes 300 hours of practice hours, resulting in 5 courses with 6 credits and 10 – 12 contact hours.*

Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education?

Yes                       No

Comments: *The policy is reasonable and within compliance of the federal definition and expectations of good practice in higher education.*

## 2) Application of Policies

Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit?

Yes                       No

Comments: *After reviewing a number of syllabi, including comparisons of online, hybrid, and traditional delivery syllabi for the same course, the course descriptions and syllabi appear appropriate, consistent, and reflective of the institution's policy on awarding credit.*

Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

Yes                       No

Comments: *At GRCC, Student Learning Outcomes are included on the Syllabi Template. The Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO's) may also be included and connected with the SLO's within course curricula. Specific program learning*

***outcomes can also be included on course syllabi. In the course syllabi reviewed, covering all delivery formats, ILO's and PLO's are aligned appropriately. Review and improvement of ILO's and PLO's are data driven and conducted annually by all departments.***

If the institution offers any alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, were the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

Yes       No

Comments: ***See above.***

If the institution offers alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonably capable of being fulfilled by students in the time allocated to justify the allocation of credit?

Yes       No

Comments: ***See above.***

Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes       No

Comments: ***Assignment of credits across all programs and delivery formats was appropriate and aligned with GRCC policies and procedures as well as commonly accepted practice in higher education.***

### **C. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate**

*Review the responses provided in this section. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign Commission follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.*

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

Yes       No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

**D. Identify and Explain Any Findings of Systematic Non-Compliance in One or More Educational Programs with Commission Policies Regarding the Credit Hour**

## Part 3: Clock Hours

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### Instructions

Complete this worksheet **only if** the institution offers any degree or certificate programs in clock hours OR that must be reported to the U.S. Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs. Non-degree programs subject to clock hour requirements (an institution is required to measure student progress in clock hours for federal or state purposes or for graduates to apply for licensure) are not subject to the credit hour definitions per se but will need to provide conversions to semester or quarter hours for Title IV purposes. Clock-hour programs might include teacher education, nursing, or other programs in licensed fields.

For these programs Federal regulations require that they follow the federal formula listed below. If there are no deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency in the institution's overall policy for awarding semester or quarter credit, accrediting agency may provide permission for the institution to provide less instruction provided that the student's work outside class in addition to direct instruction meets the applicable quantitative clock hour requirements noted below.

#### Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8)

- 1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction
- 1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction

Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour include at least 20 semester hours.

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### Worksheet on Clock Hours

#### A. Answer the Following Questions

Does the institution's credit to clock hour formula match the federal formula?

Yes

No

Comments:

If the credit to clock hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class?

Did the team determine that the institution's credit hour policies are reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education?

Yes

No

Comments:

Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes

No

Comments:

**B. Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit to clock hour conversion?**

Yes

No

**C. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate**

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's clock hour policies and practices?

Yes

No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

