

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

Handbook Revision, Course Taxonomy Data

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

The Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education’s Funding Formula adopted the following recommendation regarding the definition of course completions:

- Completed credit hours only would be counted for funding purposes; and
- Only resident student credit hours would be counted for funding purposes – credit hours completed by non-residents would be excluded;

Also, while the Committee did not take specific action on withdrawals (W’s) or “F” grades, the adopted NSHE proposed model provides that all letter grades except “W” will be included in the weighted student credit hours. Beginning in the Fall 2015, “F” grades for non-attendance will be excluded from the calculation of weighted student credit hours.

Grades of “F” based on non-attendance will be excluded from the weighted student credit hour calculations used in the funding formula. Based on the methodology established in Federal Student Aid guidelines for Return to Title IV (34 CFR 668.22), the last date of attendance will be utilized to identify “F” grades for non-attendance. This provision will essentially provide for excluding “F” grades from the weighted student credit hours utilized in the funding formula for those students who stop attending on or before 60 percent of the course instruction occurred.

The NSHE recommends that the “F” grades for non-attendance be identified in accordance with the methodology used for Federal Student Aid guidelines for Return to Title IV for purpose of consistency with an already existing business practice. The federal regulations provide guidance on determining the last date of attendance based on the “last academically related activity.” The 60 percent mark is believed to be a reasonable period of time during which a student can initiate a course withdrawal on their own since it is customarily not until after mid-term examination grades have been received that students are able to have a true measure of their grasp of course material.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend Title 4, Chapter 21, by adding a new Section 5 requiring that the last date of attendance be included for all “F” grades when submitted to the System Office via the institutions’ course taxonomy files. Amend Chapter 6, Section 2 of the *Procedures and Guidelines Manual* to provide that the last date of attendance shall be determined following the Return to Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines for last academically related activity. (See the attached Policy Proposal.)

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This proposal is brought forward as a result of the work of the Legislative Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education (Chapter 375, *Statutes of Nevada 2012*) and its recommendations to adopt a new funding formula based on completed student credit hours.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed policy will establish a methodology that meets the intent of the Legislative Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education to exclude “F” grades for non-attendance from the weighted student credit hour calculations used in the funding formula. In addition, the proposed methodology aligns with existing business practices used in financial aid that follow Return to Title IV Federal Student Aid regulations. As a federal financial aid standard, this criterion is audited annually by NSHE’s external auditors for consistency and application for Title IV financial aid recipients. As such, policies and practices that reflect this standard are

already in place, as is the necessary IT infrastructure within the student information systems – both of which can be applied to non-financial aid recipients with minor procedural and programming changes.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

This proposal has evolved over a number of conversations and compromises reached with the Legislative Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

Alternatives were discussed with the Legislative Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education and those alternatives have resulted in this proposal.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____

Amends Current Board Policy: *Title 4, Chapter 21, new Section 5*

Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: *Chapter 6, Section 2*

Other:_____

Fiscal Impact: Yes__X__ No_____

Explain: *The date of last attendance recorded on "F" grades will be used to determine those "F's" for non-attendance that will be excluded from the weighted student credit hours used in the funding formula.*

POLICY PROPOSAL
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 21, *new* SECTION 5
Course Taxonomy Data

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 5. Course Taxonomy Data and Date of Last Attendance

Each NSHE institution shall submit a course taxonomy file that will be used in determining the student credit hours that will receive state funding. The file will be formatted in accordance with procedures established by the Chancellor's Office. For the purpose of those files, NSHE institutions must designate the last date of attendance based on the last academically related activity for each student record where an "F" grade was earned. The last date of attendance will be used to identify "F" grades for non-attendance. A last date of attendance that falls on or before 60 percent of the course instruction has occurred will be excluded from the student credit hours used in the funding formula.

NSHE Procedures and Guidelines Manual
CHAPTER 6, SECTION 2
Course Taxonomy Data

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 2. Enrollment Reporting Procedures

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- 9. Course Taxonomy Data:** On the official enrollment reporting date of each term, institutions will submit a file composed of individual student records, one record per student per course. Records should be created for all students enrolled in at least one credit-bearing course that qualifies as state supported FTE. The total student FTE reported in the file must equal the institutions' official enrollment recorded for that term. System Administration is responsible for identifying all new course prefixes[,] *and* applying initial coding[~~-, and verifying assigned supported levels with all institutional representatives~~].

The file must include the corresponding end of semester grade for each student record. A last date of attendance based on the last academically related activity for all "F" grades must be included. The last date of attendance shall be determined based on the guidelines established in the Federal Student Aid Return to Title IV regulations (34 Code of Federal Regulations 668.22).

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