

UW-La Crosse: Reporting Substantive Program Changes to HLC  
March 2022

HLC Policy changes, made to align with new federal regulation, took effect on July 1, 2020. The changes include a requirement to notify the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) when making substantive changes to a program\*, as defined as:

- Change in the mode of delivery of a program (changing from face-to-face to >50% via distance delivery or changing from >50% distance delivery to face-to-face)
- An aggregate change of 25% or more of the clock hours, credit hours, or content of a program since the agency's most recent accreditation review\*\*

*\* For this document, program is defined as a stand-alone certificate program or an undergraduate/graduate major (including emphases and concentrations).*

*\*\* According to the U.S. Department of Education, program content changes include changes to a program's curriculum (measured by clock or credit hours), learning objectives, competencies, or required clinical experiences*

Institutions need to document their own definition and process used for calculating the percent of curriculum changed. Below is guidance, with examples, for calculating the percent of curriculum changed within a revision to an undergraduate or graduate program, which includes majors (with or without concentrations/emphases) and stand-alone certificates. Please report the change in the **“Estimate the total percentage of change being made to the program in this proposal”** section within CIM when a program is edited. Programs should revise, add, modify as needed. The Provost Office will track the changes and report accordingly to HLC.

*General Guidance: Provide the percent (%) of curriculum changed by dividing the total program credits (typically 120 credits for bachelor-level program) by the number of credits being changed. Any substantive course revisions apply to this calculation.*

**Changing required courses within a major.**

- *Example:* A 120 credit undergraduate program replaces two 3-credit courses with two new 3-credit courses. This would result in a 5% change (6/120).
- *Example:* A 120 credit undergraduate program is adding a new 4-credit course as a requirement for the program. This would result in a 3.3% change (4/120).

**Changing elective courses within a major** (only changes that will impact coursework completed by all students in the program need to be reported)

- *Example:* A 120 credit undergraduate program requires 6 elective credits chosen from 3 different 3-credit course options. If the program changes one of the elective courses (3 credits of the 9 credits available), no change needs to be reported.
- *Example:* If in the example above, the program changes 2 of the three elective options, the program would report a 3-credit change because all students will have to select at least one of the new elective options to fulfill program requirements. This would result in a 2.5% change (3/120).

**Increasing or decreasing total credits required in a program**

- *Example:* A 52 credit graduate program increases to 55 credits – 5.7% change (3/52).
- *Example:* A 124 credit undergraduate program decreases to 120 credits – 3.2% change (4/124).

**Program courses that are increasing/decreasing in the number of credits**

- *Example:* A 30 credit graduate program is modifying some courses, increasing one course from 3 to 5 credits and a decreasing a different course from 5 to 3 credits – 4 credits of change, 13.3% change (4/30).

**Changes to program learning outcomes**

- *Example:* A program with 6 learning outcomes is substantively revising (changing intent) 2 of the learning outcomes; there are only minor edits to the other learning outcomes. This should be reported as a 33.3% change (2/6).

**Changes in content for a required course** (significant change to content or learning outcomes required for the course)

- *Example:* A 30 credit graduate program changes a significant portion of a 3-credit required course. This is a 10% change (3/30).

**Changes in minors that are required for a specific program**

- *Example:* If a 120-credit undergraduate program requires a minor and credit hours for that minor change from 23 credits to 18 credits that results in a 5-credit impact or a 4% change (5/120).

#### **REPORT HIGHEST PERCENTAGE**

As percentage of change to the program learning outcomes and percentage of change to the programmatic credits may overlap in design, both numbers should be calculated and then the **higher** of the two percentages should be recorded in the CIM proposal for purposes of notifying percent program change to HLC. If changes do not overlap, then add the percentage changes together and report that number.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Proposers are encouraged to seek support from the UWL Registrar or the UWL Accreditation Liaison Officer to assist in the calculation of the percentage of change being reported in the CIM proposal.

The Provost's Office will be responsible for tracking and monitoring aggregate program changes over time as per HLC policy. The UWL Accreditation Liaison Officer will be responsible for notifying HLC of programs with 25% or higher aggregate substantive program changes. Notifications will occur following GCC/UCC approval of the program revision.